

○ Pound Foolish ○



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○ A Novel by Robert Molloy ○
AUTHOR OF "PRIDE'S WAY"

A Comedy of Manners
by the Author of
Pride's Way

POUND FOOLISH

by Robert Molloy

Charleston seemed quiet and somnolent in that warm summer of 1914. But there were ominous threats beneath its calm surface. Henri Lemay in particular found much to disturb him—most of all the odd behavior of his niece and ward. But also there was this unaccountable affair in Europe. And a Northern lady had had the effrontery to leave a bequest to the city for a memorial to John Brown. Then there was the worrisome business of the Lemay "fortune," alleged to be impounded in France and awaiting only the proper legal claims of its rightful heirs. Was this the answer to Henri's dreams of a secure old age or only the creation of an unscrupulous but imaginative lawyer, as Cousin Julie seemed to believe?

But for Henri Lemay, debt-ridden, proud and crotchety, these were trifles compared

(Continued on Back Flap)

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ROBERT MOLLOY

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Pound Foolish

Chapter One

THE YEAR 1914 was epochal, even in the palmetto-lined city of Charleston, and particularly so for Henri Lemay, an elderly bachelor of abundant dignity and scanty resources.

His niece and ward, Leonie Hughes, was about to be graduated from college, and he was inordinately vain about that. Moreover, forgetful of the long and stormy struggle to train her up in the way she should go, Henri was eagerly looking forward to an indefinite period of bliss with the girl at his side. He would not have thought that anything could rival these anticipations.

But Cousin Eugenie Poiron's letter was undeniably exciting. Through the kind offices of a New York lawyer, she had learned that one Theophile Lemay had died in France in 1868, leaving a large estate which was still unsettled and to which the American Lemays had a very just claim. For purposes of investigation, the lawyer had suggested a retainer of ten dollars per person interested.

Having communicated these facts to his sister Heloise as they were breakfasting, Henri slipped his pince-nez into his breast pocket and waited for comment. A born romantic, he was nevertheless reluctant to admit that he had any faith in this affair. Heloise was always so skeptical.

"Things like that," she said, further confirming his opinion of her, "never happen to people like us."

"It would be wonderful for Leonie, though," Henri ventured timidly.

"It would be wonderful for all of us," Heloise said.

Henri said no more, at the moment, about the possibilities of wealth; but at dinnertime—of course in a purely objective way—he discussed the Lemay millions with Heloise and added a characteristic warning.

"For Heaven's sake don't mention it to a soul," he advised. "We don't want every Tom, Dick and Harry to know our business."

However, like Tartarin of Tarascon on the subject of big game, he had already said too much, and Queenie, the cook, had heard it all. Queenie, the descendant of house servants in a good family, had long suffered from an inferiority complex about her employers. The Lemays were poor buckras and she was keenly aware that she derived no glory from association with them. When her colleagues vaunted the generosity or the elegance of other houses, Queenie thought gloomily of the infinite economies of Miss Heloise and the fastidious shabbiness of Mr. Henri and kept sullen silence. She had triumphed briefly with Miss Leonie's going to college, but that had been nearly four years ago.

It is understandable, then, that when Queenie heard Mr. Henri talk about getting millions from some rich ancestor, she did not take long to publish the good news. From the kitchen to the front rooms, and vice versa, the news shuttled swiftly, and by morning most of Charleston knew that Mr. Lemay was going to come into money.

Miss Susan Williams, that aged but inexhaustible fount of personal items, received the story promptly. With Miss Susan, news was something it was better to give than to receive, and as she was temporarily prevented from circulating by lumbago, she conveyed the report to her only visitor Saturday morning, Miss Euterpe Greene, who had dropped in on her way to Fleischmann's drugstore.

Charleston's precocious and luxuriant spring was yielding to aggressive summer. Oleanders and roses, cannas and jessamine had replaced the azalea blossoms and the fire of the pomegranate trees. Mosquito canopies were already up, and efficient housekeepers were in the second stage of the long campaign against the indefatigable bedbug, experimenting with new or confirming the efficacy of old methods of extermination.

The ancient drugstore sold a liquid which an older group considered supreme for this purpose, and a number of the black-clad old ladies of that faction chanced to visit Fleischmann's that forenoon, to fetch for themselves the oblong packages which the excellent pharmacist, with a tact years ahead of his time, was accustomed to keep on the shelves in plain green wrapping paper. For the bedbug, though ubiquitous, was unacknowledged and unmentionable.

Miss Euterpe Greene, after an exchange of symptoms with Miss

Georgie Peters, Miss Francie Dickson, and others, mentioned the fact that Henri Lemay was reputed heir to a substantial legacy.

"It was an insult," said Miss Francie, tapping her cane angrily on the sidewalk at the word "legacy."

This apparent non-sequitur was entirely clear to the other ladies. They hastened to assure Miss Francie that the legacy under discussion was not the bequest of that Northern woman, Miss Amelia Southall, who had offered the city five thousand dollars with which to construct a memorial fountain to John Brown.

"It was an insult, anyway," Miss Francie persisted.

All the black-clad ladies agreed.

"What I was talking about, though," said Miss Euterpe, "was Henri Lemay's legacy. A rich ancestor in France, they say."

"Henri Lemay?" Miss Francie inquired dreamily. "His father owned that big place on Edisto Island, but their money all went with the War."

Miss Francie, although her hearing was excellent, was unlikely ever to understand about anything that had occurred since the Confederate War, although, having been present at the earthquake and the great cyclone of 1893, she had been forced to accept these events, and had been moved by indignation to comprehend the matter of the Southall bequest. Miss Georgie, aware of this, repeated the facts, as known, about the Lemay windfall.

"It will be a godsend, no matter how little," she concluded. "Poor Henri Lemay is head over heels in debt."

Miss Euterpe nodded. "That niece of theirs," she said, "has cost them a pretty penny."

"Yes, indeed," said Miss Harriet Grant. "Besides leading them a dance."

"What good does college do a gyrl?" Miss Georgie demanded. "She'll just come back here looking down on everybody else. Why, I heard—"

Another black-robed lady now joined the little group—a short, plump, bustling old soul with a keen glance and a jovial expression. The others fell silent, for Miss Julie Gerard was a cousin of Henri Lemay's and reserved to herself the privilege of criticizing her relatives.

"Good-morning," Miss Julie responded to their greetings in a baritone voice that could be heard far and wide, Miss Julie being

quite deaf or, as she expressed it, a little hard of hearing. She glanced at the paper packages the old ladies were holding. "Bedbug killer, eh?" she rumbled. Miss Julie believed in telling the truth and shaming the devil.

The ladies quivered with mortification and hastened to change the subject by asking how she was. It might have occurred to them, upon reflection, that this was a risky choice, for Miss Julie's diagnoses of her internal condition were often harrowing in their frankness.

"So-so, thank God," she replied. "Me liver is torpid as usual, but I'm used to that. I came to get some sort of medicine. I swallowed some orange seeds," she explained, "and I certainly don't want appendiceitis at my age."

The ladies nodded sagely. Miss Georgie recommended senna, Miss Euterpe was for ipecac, and Miss Harriet and others suggested mustard. Miss Julie, whose late sister had been a nurse, brushed aside these non-professional prescriptions.

"We were just talking about the legacy," Miss Euterpe quavered hopefully.

Miss Julie's eyes flashed. "That Northern vixen," she snapped. "I'd like to John Brown *her*."

"We meant Mr. Lemay's legacy," Miss Euterpe explained.

Miss Julie's eyes darted quickly around the circle of faces, but not a muscle of her own face moved. "Oh, yes," she said wisely. "Of course."

"We just heard that his ancestor had left all that money," said Miss Georgie.

Miss Julie appeared to be considering just how much she ought to reveal. "Well, there are a good many of us," she said judiciously, "and maybe when it's divided up there won't be a great deal for each one. The Lemays are a large family. Very large."

The ladies understood perfectly that Miss Julie did not at present wish to give any more information about a family matter, and they turned to the subject of ailing friends, recent deaths, and other cheering affairs until Miss Julie remarked that she must go in and consult the druggist.

When she emerged from the fragrant and comforting atmosphere of the old-fashioned apothecary shop with a package of powders in

her purse, Miss Julie's usually benevolent expression had, despite her satisfaction at having a new remedy to try, given way to one of wrath.

"Why didn't they consult me about it?" she muttered to herself. "I'm the eldest of the family and I had a right to know before anybody else. Common decency ought to have told them that." She took out a large handkerchief and mopped her brow, for the day was hot, and she thought longingly of a cool glass of the homemade rootbeer sold so cheaply at the little Negro shop at the foot of Beaufain Street. But, reasoning that this might conflict with the powders she had bought to ward off appendicitis, she decided that water would have to do, and she quickened her steps, for home was a long way off.

The walk gave her time to cultivate a just indignation at the way she had been treated.

"Of course," she mused, "I don't take any stock in such nonsense. A Lemay leaving millions, indeed! Folderol.

"I expect to tell Henri Lemay what I think of him. He should have come to me immediately.

"Exposing me to mortification before all those tale-bearing old cats! I did fool them, though. I had to think fast to do it."

She popped a peppermint into her mouth and proceeded homeward, still fuming.

"And now," she reflected, "my hands are tied."

The situation did present a nice dilemma. To reveal total unfamiliarity with this business would be humiliating in the extreme. She could not under any circumstances visit Henri Lemay or Heloise now, even casually, for it was their business to seek her out and inform her of this family event. She could not discuss the news at her own daughter's house, for Annette might have heard about it already. Probably she had, Miss Julie thought, with an old lady's facile conviction that people were forever concealing things from her.

"I've got a bone to pick with Henri Lemay," she grumbled, more peevish each minute. "He'll have to come to me if he wants to know anything about the family. It would serve him right if I refused to discuss the matter at all. Maybe if they couldn't trace the heirs that would serve them right for their rudeness."

And then another idea occurred to her.

"If they think they are going to cheat our branch of the family out of that money," she reflected, "they're buying rotten meat. I don't care for meself, God knows, but I have children. Henri Lemay is not bright enough to set Cooper River on fire, but even he must know the ins and outs of our relationship. I hope he doesn't think I'm related to him through the pastry-baking Dulacs."

Her supply of the milk of human kindness was thoroughly curdled.

"Wait until I catch Henri Lemay," she muttered. "I'll read his title."

Chapter Two

THE CHARLESTON OF legend is the Charleston of stately houses south of Broad Street, family traditions over two hundred years old, and the suggestion that all citizens of the past were public figures, all warriors at least colonels, and every lady a *grande dame*.

But that is not the only Charleston. There are several, perhaps less imposing, but each with its own traditions and pride. Some of these groups are as poor as any decayed aristocrats. They live in simple residences scattered about the city, hold themselves high, mind their manners, and are beholden to nobody.

One group traces its ancestry to France, takes its religion from Rome, and came to Charleston one hundred and fifty years ago by way of Santo Domingo, from which it fled when the blacks revolted. Its men fought in the Confederate War and they and their children, in the early years of this century, were as typical Charlestonians as you could find.

A classic example of this sort of Charlestonian was Henri Lemay, who, on the afternoon of that Saturday when his cousin Miss Julie Gerard had been so deeply offended, was leaving his rickety house on Coming Street for an afternoon stroll.

The house was of two stories with an attic, and in imitation of its betters turned its side to the street. At the right a door led directly to the downstairs piazza, from which you entered the house. A driveway, screened from the street by a high wooden latticed gate hung with wisteria, led to a small back yard which rejoiced in a puny fig tree, a sagging woodshed, and a dilapidated privy patched with a tin sign which proclaimed the merits of Eisenlohr's Cinco Cigars. Along the piazza, twining around banisters which had once been painted brown, were morning glories and sweet peas; and a few straggling petunias fought for life along the piazza edge. The vista at the rear, of a type not shown in the guidebooks, was of the backs of similar houses, and that at the side was the brick

wall of a more pretentious dwelling from which the facing had flaked off in large patches. The house had a red tin roof, badly eaten away in spots, and had once been ochre with green shutters. Antedating by a good many years the gingerbread 'eighties and 'nineties, it was not a wholly tasteless little house, but it was shabby.

Shabby, too, but with more signs of upkeep, was the master. Henri Lemay was a very small man. His face was long and thin, ornamented with luxuriant gray mustaches, and rather sad. His fading black alpaca suit was well-pressed and brushed, his flabby Panama and his high collar were shining white, and his high shoes, though worn and cracked, were brilliantly blacked. The white cravat he wore was obviously homemade and so was his haircut. The silver head of his cane was worn as smooth as his manners and his back was as stiff as his principles. Ostentation was as foreign to his nature as it was impossible to his means, but, if a man of five-feet-three can be said to strut, he strutted. You would have singled him out anywhere as a gentleman of the old school, and he would not have disappointed you. He had furthermore the reputation of being the most honest man in Charleston.

He was even poorer than he looked, for he was in debt. Like all his type, he had the pride of Lucifer and would neither have discussed his poverty or his liabilities, nor admitted to himself that they were known.

One of Henri Lemay's simple pleasures was a stroll, on Saturday afternoons after business, along King Street, that narrow rialto of Charleston.

These expeditions were what Heloise called window-shopping. As a rule, Henri had no intention of buying or even coveting the goods displayed in the city's modest emporiums. He was not stingy by nature, and if a kinder fate had permitted he would have had new clothes and shoes and would have paid regular visits to Friday's barber shop. But when a man is sixty-four and in debt and has a niece at college, a sister at home, and a very small salary, it is well if he has learned, as the Chinese say, to make his heart small.

The things Henri Lemay wanted were not many and not great. A small new table phonograph and a few choice records, for he was an enthusiastic singer; a bottle of sherry now and then from one of the blind tigers, an occasional box of good cigars—these summed up his cravings, and even these he regarded as beyond his reach.

But that Saturday afternoon, with the hint of the legacy constantly in his thoughts, he wondered timidly if, after all, he might not enjoy some of the possessions he longed for. In this mild fit of optimism, he stopped at the corner of Society Street to deliberate the matter of going into Haverty's for a demonstration of records he might one day buy. And there his attention was suddenly distracted from his inheritance and from music.

A tall elderly gentleman in gray and a young man, tall also and rather dark, were about to pass. They bowed coolly, and Henri responded in kind, and after they had passed he thought about them both in no very complimentary terms. For the elderly gentleman was Colonel Edmund Calvert, a Unionist, who had long been a friend of Henri's fiancée, Miss Antoinette Fielding, and who had, furthermore, once referred to Henri's singing as reminding him of a bantam rooster with a megaphone.

"That blagyard!" Henri muttered.

The young man was even more disturbing to his peace of mind. He had once, many years before, mimicked Henri's singing, of course at the instigation of his uncle. He rejoiced in a Christian and middle name which in themselves were pieces of brazen defiance—Lincoln, after the Republican president, Petigru, after the famous Unionist. And Lincoln Petigru Calvert had, from early childhood, been interested in Henri's niece Leonie.

Years earlier, the young man had gone North to study and Henri had written him off. Now he was alarmed.

"I wonder what that young scamp is doing here?" he thought. Leonie would be home, permanently, in a week. Disapproval and jealousy gripped him. In no mood now to permit the obliging clerk in Haverty's to play those records, he strode off downtown.

The sunshine of late spring was bright and hot, the air heavy and stale and laden with the miasma of river mud. Young men lolled on the wire-backed chairs of the Poinciana poolroom, shoppers ambled along, and in the vicinity of Hasell Street, where St. Mary's Church stood, various old Catholic ladies in their sacerdotage were trudging to confession.

Henri was standing before Siegling's window, under the metal replica of Caruso's record of "Celeste Aïda" which overhung the shop. Reading the new list of releases, he looked up and recognized one of the old ladies as his cousin Julie Gerard.

He wanted to see her, to ask about the ramifications of the Lemay family, and at the same time he dreaded the encounter in such a public place, for there was no predicting what kind of undignified caper the old lady might cut right there on King Street. Henri had already seen, to his horror, that she was carrying a small paper sack of candies, and as she drew nearer she popped one into her mouth.

Reluctantly abandoning Plançon, Journet, and other singers, Henri faced in Miss Julie's direction and swept off his Panama.

"Good-afternoon, Cousin Julie," he said. The voice that issued from his small body was surprisingly strong, rich and deep, but quite as if she had not heard him, or even seen him, Miss Julie sailed by and left Henri with his hat and stick in his hand and his mouth open. Innocent of having given any cause for this cut, he pursued the old lady and greeted her again.

Now that her *amour-propre* had been satisfied and her displeasure signified, Miss Julie relented.

"Well, Henri!" she said haughtily in her strong baritone.

"How are you, Cousin Julie?"

"Hot," said Miss Julie, thrusting her gold-rimmed spectacles up under her black bonnet and wiping her eyes. "I can feel the sweat running down me back."

Henri quivered slightly.

"Of course, I'm only so-so," Miss Julie continued. "I've been a bit run down since poor Tessie died."

"Naturally," Henri said.

"I swallowed some orange seeds, but I got some good powders for them so I expect I needn't to worry about appendiceetis."

Henri nodded and went on to the well-being of the O'Donnells.

"All well, thank God," Miss Julie replied. "And Heloise?"

"Oh, very well," Henri said. He cleared his throat. "Uh—Cousin Julie, I've been meaning to ask you about that Lemay money."

Miss Julie again drew herself up. "Indeed!" she said. "Well, I'm very glad to know it. Particularly as I've been allowed to find out about it from strangers. Perfect strangers."

Henri stared.

"I'm used to being slighted," said Miss Julie, "but I do think

it was the least you could do to inform me of this affair before you told everybody else."

Now perfectly aware of the reasons for Miss Julie's truculent bearing, Henri tried to smooth her down.

"I have not told a soul," he said, "and neither has Heloise, I am sure. I can't imagine how anyone else knew about it. I most certainly would have come to tell you about it if I hadn't thought Cousin Eugenie must have written to you too."

"Eugenie Poiron?" Miss Julie rumbled, and her face assumed a dramatic expression of amazement. "Eugenie Poiron? And since when has Eugenie Poiron been managing the affairs of the Lemay family?" She laughed sardonically. "Well, that's rich," she said. "Yes, that's rich."

"A lawyer in New York wrote to her," Henri said uncomfortably. "He told her that Theophile Lemay had died in 1868 and left a large fortune. He wants us to contribute ten dollars for each person interested and——"

"H'm," said Miss Julie. "I can't think why she didn't write to me. Plain ordinary good manners should have told her to do that."

"Perhaps," said poor Henri, "she felt that I was a business man——"

Miss Julie regarded him ironically.

"—and perhaps she didn't really know you were one of the Lemays."

It was unfortunate that Miss Julie's poor hearing often caused her to misunderstand just the things that would confuse an issue.

"Who says I am not one of the Lemays?" she demanded warmly. "My own great-grandmother's maiden name was Lemay. Eugenie Poiron is a sight more distantly related to them than I am, and you ought to know that, Henri. I hope," Miss Julie added pointedly, "you don't think I'm one of the Dulacs."

"I never thought anything of the kind," Henri said, flushing at the slur—"No, thank you, I never eat candy in public—I said perhaps Cousin Eugenie—not me—didn't understand the relationship."

"Then," said Miss Julie with one of the reversals of logic of which she was a leading exponent, "she should have written to ask me about it. I won't pretend that I'm not offended. I am. Deeply offended. I've got a good mind not to have anything to do with the whole affair."

Henri sighed. "I'm very sorry it happened," he said. "I thought you could tell me something about Theophile Lemay."

Miss Julie did not perhaps care about the money involved, but she was a recognized authority on the history of her own and other families and loved to dispense her knowledge. Never a woman to cut off her nose to spite her face, she nodded to indicate that she was mollified and that she could indeed tell him a great deal.

"Tell me," Henri persisted, "who was this Theophile Lemay and how rich was he?"

Crunching another hard candy, Miss Julie considered, and Henri waited apprehensively. Unlike many drily factual genealogists, his cousin was more likely to dwell upon the eccentricities of her ancestors than upon mere statistics.

"Theophile Lemay," she repeated. "Lemme see. He was your grandfather's third cousin once removed. He married into a family named Perrier. They owned a lot of vineyards and I believe it was said that they watered the wine they sold. I expect Theophile may have come into the property in some way or other. How much money it was is another question. It would have to be considerable if it's to go around the Lemay family. They were like rabbits, all of them."

"I don't know the hows and whys of the money being tied up so long," Henri said, determinedly ignoring this coarseness, "but I judge there's some legal technicality involved."

"If that's the case," said Miss Julie, "you'd best not put too much stock in it. The lawyers will get whatever there is. He that expecteth little will not be disappointed. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." She broke off her imitation of Bartlett's *Quotations*. "Well, I've got to be running along, Henri. I want to make me confession to Father Dodd. Father Schmidt at the Cathedral is getting a bit hard of hearing and I don't want to bellow me sins out to every Tom, Dick and Harry."

"Do you want to give ten dollars for this investigation?" Henri asked.

"I'll have to see about it," Miss Julie said. "Ten dollars is a heap of money. Give Heloise me love, and the child, too. She'll be home soon, I suppose."

"Her graduation is next Saturday," Henri said proudly.

"H'm," said Miss Julie, conveying to Henri what he knew quite well—that she did not approve of girls going to college. "You going?"

"Yes," Henri said. "I feel I ought to be there. It's a great occasion."

"I must send her a trifle," Miss Julie said. "Good-bye, Henri. Remember me in your prayers."

Henri promised. He replaced his hat and watched her cross the street. As she reached the other side she paused.

"Henri!" she roared. "I just remembered. Theophile Lemay had the fits!"

Very close to demonstrating the laws of heredity, Henri fled before Miss Julie could recall any more discreditable things about his forebears and shout them across the intervening spaces. He felt that everyone on King Street was staring at him, and he walked away rapidly in spite of the heat.

"Cousin Julie," he growled, "is certainly getting touchy. And I wish she didn't always express herself in terms unbecoming a Southern gentlewoman."

He was irked, too, by her skepticism concerning the Lemay fortune. At seventy-four, and with one foot and four toes in the grave, it was all very well for her to cast doubt on his good luck. This feeling of irritation, and his disapproval of the earthiness of her conversation, made him, somehow, want to believe in the prospect Cousin Eugenie had unearthed. Strange things did happen. And the money, at interest all the years from 1868 to 1914 . . . Henri's borrowings had made him an unwilling authority on compound interest, and after deciding on a possible original sum, he calculated that there might now very well be millions of francs. Perhaps even of dollars.

Something small and round gleamed on the sidewalk before him, just alongside the window of Frierson's drugstore. It was a ten cent piece.

The heir to the Lemay millions underwent a struggle. That dime promised a good cigar, and Henri's mouth almost watered publicly. His Christmas box of colorado claros, Henry O'Donnell's regular gift, had long been exhausted, probably with the assistance of Lafayette Washington Lee, their hanger-on, via Queenie the cook, and Henri could not often afford to buy a cigar. Now, the thought having entered his mind, he longed for one. But could he, literally and figuratively, stoop to retrieve a base coin right there in the street?

Henri set a thin shoe carefully over the piece of money and stood

ostensibly observing the headache and backache cures in the store window, while he thought the matter out.

Ten cents. On the one hand, a good cigar. The fragrant aroma of Havana tobacco, the satisfying rich taste of the smoke, the feeling of satisfaction from the first stripping off of the band and the biting of the end.

And, on the other hand, the indignity of bending over to pick up a dime on King Street on Saturday afternoon, instead of grandly pointing it out to some small boy, as befitted the son of George Lemay, once owner of broad acres along the Edisto River.

An old superstition came to Henri's aid. "Coming events," he murmured, "cast their shadows before." Suddenly seeing the finding of the dime as a good omen for his inheritance, he decided that it would not do to affront fortune.

He felt dramatically in his trousers pocket to indicate the loss of silver. He leaned over and picked up the dime. He looked beyond a little on either side of the spot where it had lain, showed by his expression that he despaired of finding the other lost change, placed the ten cents casually in his pocket, and continued to observe the remedies in the window. Some minutes passed before he proceeded on his way, not directly to Pinkussohn's shop, but up King Street for another block or two before he made his way toward the cigar store.

About to enter, he paused, halted by his conscience and by the habit of years of self-abnegation.

Perhaps, he thought, Heloise would enjoy a bit of ice cream.

This time the struggle was brief. (Cigars, after all, were bad for a singer.) Henri bought a half-pint container of vanilla and hurried home before it could melt. He did not like to be seen carrying packages, but luckily the neighborhood piazzas were deserted.

He unlocked the door and entered the piazza, and the stooped figure of Lafayette Washington Lee rose from its restful posture at the rear.

"Evenin', Mistuh Henri," Lafayette mumbled, and collapsed.

"Good-evening, Lafayette," Henri said. He hung his hat on the ancient hatrack, rested his cane in the umbrella stand, and went to the kitchen, where he found the diminutive Queenie ironing a shirt.

"Queenie, I've brought some ice cream for Miss Heloise. You'd better serve it before it melts."

"Yes suh," Queenie said, replacing the iron on the stove. "You wants some?"

"No, I don't believe so. Better have some yourself."

"Thank you, Mistuh Henri," Queenie said, "but I don't think I cares for any this afternoon."

Henri nodded curtly. For a moment, with the sensitivity of the poor, he wondered if Queenie was gibing at the fact that he had brought only a half pint, but he decided that she wasn't. It was just the way of everyone in that house, forever pretending not to want something so that somebody else could have enough.

Heloise sat in a rocking chair on the upstairs piazza hemming a handkerchief she had cut down for herself out of one of Henri's and apparently enjoying the task. As her brother came through the door she looked up with a smile.

Miss Heloise Lemay was a short plump woman, a couple of years younger than her brother, with a hearty round face, pretty blue eyes, and a small, round, humorous mouth. She was dressed in thin gray cotton, and the toes of sensible black shoes peeped out from her long skirts. Her hair, which was graying, was worn high on her head and swept back from her brow, giving an even greater look of frankness to her pleasant features.

"Enjoy your walk, Brother?" she inquired.

Henri sat down rather wearily in the other piazza rocker. "Not so much as I might have," he said. "I met Cousin Julie and she hauled me over the coals because she hadn't been told about the legacy. In fact, she tried to cut me dead on King Street."

"Dear me," Heloise said, choking back a laugh.

"She was eating hard candy," Henri complained, and then Heloise did laugh. "And after she told me that Theophile Lemay had married into the Perrier family and that they were vintners and watered their wine, she yelled all the way across King Street that Theophile Lemay had fits."

"Dignity," Heloise said tolerantly, "was never Cousin Julie's long suit."

"And, of course she's all put out about not being told. How do you suppose she found out? I haven't told anybody."

"Neither have I," Heloise said quickly. "The grapevine, I expect."

She indicated the general direction of the kitchen and rolled her eyes. Whereupon, as if conjured up, Queenie appeared with the ice cream.

Heloise started and then looked pleased.

"Well, what a surprise!" she exclaimed. "Thank you, Queenie." Queenie silently vanished. "Aren't you going to have some?"

"No, I just thought a mouthful would taste good to you," Henri said.

"It was very thoughtful. I hope that legacy isn't making you extravagant."

"No," Henri said. "You know I'm too old a bird to be caught with that sort of thing, Sister. I found a dime," he admitted, flushing.

"Well, I'm glad you weren't too proud to pick it up. I feel like a pig, eating all by myself. Go on, tell me what Cousin Julie said about the legacy."

"She don't seem to take much stock in it. She said ten dollars was a heap of money."

"It certainly is."

"On the other hand, I don't like to think of depriving you and Leonie of—of a competence," Henri said, "just to save a few dollars."

Heloise was silent. Henri, disappointed at her lack of support, although of course he hadn't expected it, dropped that aspect of the subject. "I wish Queenie wouldn't talk," he said fretfully.

"Brother, they all talk. How on earth do you suppose people would know anything if the servants didn't tell?"

"Cousin Julie," Henri persisted, thoughtfully, "didn't say just what she had heard, but I'd like to bet that it's all over Charleston that we are about to inherit a fortune. Everything we do will be watched now more than ever."

"If they see us spending any money carelessly," Heloise said, "they'll know it's true." And she laughed merrily.

"To change the subject," Henri said, clearing his throat, "I saw that Calvert boy this afternoon with his uncle. He's here in the city."

Heloise took a last spoonful of the ice cream.

"For good?" she inquired.

"That's what I'd like to find out," Henri said. "I suppose Antoinette will know. The Colonel," he added, hating to admit the fact, "goes to see her sometimes."

"Well, Brother," Heloise said, "until you find out that he is going to be here for good, don't worry about it. In the first place, Leonie has probably outgrown the—the attachment. And in the second place, what can't be cured must be endured." She put the sauce dish and spoon on the window sill and took up her sewing. "You must be careful now not to plague Leonie about it. You forget how wilful she is."

In the absence of his niece, Henri carried in his mind an image of her that was little short of perfection. He frowned.

"I wish you wouldn't always criticize the child," he said. "And as for opposing any association between them, it's my plain duty. I can't have my niece going with the nephew of that blagyard."

"You're too hard on the Colonel, Brother," Heloise said.

As Henri could not discuss the Colonel without excitement, he muttered "blagyard" again, turned, and went downstairs, intending to do a few vocal exercises. But first he went out on the piazza, and there, still seated on the step at the back, was Lafayette, puffing a corn-cob pipe. The smoke, evil-smelling though it was, carried temptation with it, and after a few uncertain moments Henri went over to Lafayette.

Lafayette rose respectfully. He was a dilapidated Negro of uncertain age with a pleasant black face and a wardrobe consisting of ancient black trousers, relentlessly patched, a brown vest, and a tattered blue coat, all flagrantly casual as to fit. He was accustomed to attribute the size variations of his clothing to the fact that he had never been fortunate enough to work for gentlemen of the right proportions. "'E too small," he explained humorously, "or 'e too big." He bore this patiently.

"Lafayette," Henri said, *sotto voce*, "I wish you'd go over to the Dutchman's on Greene Street and get me some stogies." He abstracted a nickel from his pocket and handed it over.

Lafayette nodded and shamled out of the gate on his errand. Trusting that Heloise had not paid any particular attention to his departure, Henri sat in a rocker and thought uncomfortably of the presence in town of Lincoln Petigru Calvert until Lafayette returned, which was about ten minutes, for Lafayette did not pretend to be swift.

"Here you is, suh," he said, handing over the package of three cheroots.

"Thank you, Lafayette," Henri said. "Here, you have one."

Lafayette accepted the gift without marked enthusiasm and gave Henri a match. Henri went out into the yard, looked casually around and then up at the piazza, saw that Heloise had gone inside, and quickly repaired to the crazy woodshed. Trying not to notice the warmth or the smell of sour wood chips and mouldy planking, he selected a pine block for a stool, lighted one of the acrid cheroots, and leaned back against the wall of the shed, half-ashamed of himself—but, after all, he didn't want Heloise to smell the smoke.

He had a nostalgic sense of having been in this situation before, but it was some time before he could piece the past together clearly. Fifty years earlier, he had sneaked out to a similar retreat and had surreptitiously inhaled the perfecto he had bought with part of the twenty-five cents he was allowed out of his week's salary as an office boy. He had spent some of the rest of that money each week on a glass of beer. Forbidden fruits. Funny, he hadn't thought of that for years. Come to think of it, his aged father, who would have whaled him very thoroughly for either enjoyment, must have been all of forty-five then. It made Henri feel old to realize that.

After all, he was sixty-four. Was he getting into his dotage already, letting the idea of that Lemay fortune tempt him into spending money for luxuries?

Chapter Three

SOMEWHAT CHASTENED BY confession, Miss Julie sat down to supper with her daughter's family in a pensive mood. She fortified herself with scrambled eggs and muffins as if she were expecting a famine and ruminated how to reveal knowledge of the family fortune without admitting that she had not been the first informed. When she had decided this point, she waited for what she thought was a lull in the conversation.

"I met Henri Lemay on King Street today," she said, "looking like a plucked chicken, as usual."

Henry O'Donnell, Miss Julie's son-in-law, abandoned his story and waited politely.

"Poor Cousin Henri," said Annette.

Miss Julie regarded her daughter thoughtfully. "Well, child," she said, "I'm not sure I'd feel too sorry for him right now. Henri is riding a very high horse these days. He was on his way to tell me that some New York lawyers have written to him that there's a fortune in the family and he thinks we may all be rich before very long." She laughed heartily at the very idea. "Of course I knew all about it. Henry, you ought to do something for the poor fellow."

Henry O'Donnell shifted his great frame and leaned back in his chair. His reddish mustache pricked up as it was likely to do when he was challenged. "What can I do for Mr. Lemay?" he inquired. "He has a job. I haven't got a better one to offer him. And you can't offer him any other kind of help. He'd be insulted."

"Henri is a good fellow," said Miss Julie, charitably. "He has the reputation of being the most honest man in Charleston, and he writes a beautiful hand."

"The trouble is that he's signed too many notes with it," Henry said. "And his very honesty and innocence will get him in trouble one of these days."

Criticism from Henry found Miss Julie ready to defend her kin.

"He needs a lot of money," she said, and then her tone became disapproving. "For that gyirl. She has to have the best of everything. And if he gets any appreciation for all he's done, it will be news to me. College!"

"I expect Betsy to go to college," Henry said, not liking this slur on higher education.

Miss Julie did not approve of that ambition either but she was prepared to be conciliatory.

"That's different," she replied. "You're rich."

"I am not rich," Henry said quickly. "Far from it." He glared at his eldest son, who was making the humorous gesture of putting first one hand and then the other over the opposite fist. "That will do, Joe," he suggested.

"What I was getting to," said Miss Julie, when order had been restored, "is that Henri has this new bee in his bonnet now. He asked me if Theophile Lemay, his grandfather's third cousin once removed, had been rich."

"Well, was he?" Henry demanded, anxious to resume his story.

"That," said Miss Julie, "is beside the point." She took another muffin and thrust a large slab of butter between the halves. "What I'm afraid of is that poor Henri will get his hopes up. Some people," she continued, ignoring the fact that she had complete confidence in the wearing of red flannel for rheumatism, the pre-natal marking of children, and the dangers of eating cheese at night, "will believe anything."

"Well, Miss Julie," Henry said with slightly fatuous confidence, "I think he'll find out the truth soon. This business of telling big families that there's a fortune waiting for them is one of the biggest swindles going."

Miss Julie stiffened.

"It is entirely possible," she said, "that there's been money in the Lemay family as well as in any other."

"Who said there wasn't?" Henry asked blandly.

"And I don't like your use of the word 'swindle' about something concerning my family," said Miss Julie.

"I'm sorry," Henry said. "However, there are a good many cases of lawyers making money by this sort of thing. They need so much for proving descent and so forth, and by the time they get it it always turns out that the government has taken over the money for taxes."

"Well, I must say," Miss Julie declared, momentarily sidetracked, "they've got a lot to do cheating poor people like that."

"But they do," Henry said. "If I were you, Miss Julie, I'd try to persuade Mr. Lemay not to have anything to do with this business. If it's on the level the lawyers will be anxious enough to make something out of it and they'll probably do all the work on a contingent fee—a percentage of what they collect."

Miss Julie, however, could not forget that Henry had given her some very bad advice about an investment years before, and she privately determined to contribute her ten dollars to the Lemay legacy fund. Henry O'Donnell, furthermore, must not be allowed to assume that her family was unable to have a fortune like other families.

"Maybe if Cousin Henri gets all that money he'll marry Miss Antoinette Fielding," Joe suggested.

"Don't make fun of the poor old gentleman, Joe," Henry said, directing a frown at his son and then at Annette, who was choking with laughter. Miss Julie, always deafly suspicious of merriment, asked what the joke was and it had to be repeated.

"Romeo and Juliet," she chuckled. "Still, you never can tell. There's many a good tune played on an old fiddle."

But since she was in the state of grace she did not pursue ribaldry any further and Henry, relieved, was able to proceed to the story of his triumph over a brash rival in debate, while Miss Julie concentrated on muffins, blackberry jam, and coffee, the quickest method of raising ten dollars, and the probable state of her appendix.

Henri Lemay, having eaten his own meager supper of biscuits, molasses, and tea, had gone to his room to make his toilette before going to pay his regular Saturday night visit to Miss Antoinette Fielding.

Trolling the "Slander Aria" from *The Barber of Seville*, of which opera he was naturally reminded under the circumstances, he lathered his cheeks with a brush the bristles of which had been reduced by decades of use to a length of three-quarters of an inch. He shaved with a razor worn almost to the shape of a stiletto by many years of stropping ("Finest Sheffield," Henri often said of it. "You don't see razors like that nowadays.") and wiped it on squares of paper cut from the *News and Courier* and hung on a hook over his wash-

stand. For a lotion he used Florida Water, a cheap cologne which he eked out by diluting it. He put on his least-mended shirt, his stiffest high collar, one of the homemade white ties into which he thrust his gold stickpin, and gave a last flick to his shoes. A final careful curling of the ends of his impressive mustaches, a meticulous brushing back over the ears of his nearly white hair and a painstaking arrangement of the neatly roached front and Henri was ready.

Then he descended the piazza steps, plucked a petunia for his buttonhole, and was off.

There was only one thing lacking to the perfection of the evening—an evening made up of jessamine, wisteria, the damp fragrance of the giant magnolias, climbing roses, oleanders, and a mere suggestion of salt water and river mud. And that thing was a mellow Havana. Accustomed to making the best of things, Henri drew his remaining stogie from his breast pocket and lighted that. Soothed, he strode along, his gleaming Panama a moving point of effulgence under the street lights.

For fully two thousand Saturday evenings Henri had made this journey afoot to Miss Antoinette's stately house on New Street. He had begun as a young lover and had continued through most of the ills aging flesh inherits. He had kept on through wind, rain and cold, spring, summer, fall and winter, with ever-lessening hope and finally with a resigned acceptance of his fate.

That he had so long remained single was no fault of Henri's. Early in life he and Heloise had accepted the fact that the care of their parents was their responsibility, and as Antoinette had a similar duty toward her own father, the years had slipped by.

Henri had been ambitious, too. In his late boyhood he had discovered that he had the voice of a carousing stevedore, as if nature had been playing a prank on one of his small size—and he had dreamed of becoming a famous basso. That, naturally, had been given up. In his forties Henri had, after the deaths of his father and mother, begun to make plans again, and he would have struck out for a change, had not his younger sister and her husband died of yellow fever in Guatemala. He and Heloise had adopted their baby niece, Leonie, and for nineteen years they had been faithful guardians. Perhaps Henri had been too faithful, for in his struggle to provide the best for the child he had established a stationery business which soon failed.

It had taken him fifteen painful years to pay off the creditors, for he had refused to take advantage of bankruptcy. This had given him the reputation of being the most honest man in Charleston, but he was still working for twenty dollars a week.

However, none of these disappointments had succeeded in bending Henri's back, and he stood as straight as a young man in the imposing doorway of the fine old Georgian house and rapped discreetly with the brass knocker.

The door was opened by Lucy, Antoinette's tottering maid of all work, who had also once been young and saucy.

"Good-evenin', Mistuh Henri."

"Good-evening, Lucy. Is Miss Antoinette at home?"

For forty years he had been asking that same question.

"Yes suh," Lucy responded. "Won't you come in? She'll be right here."

Henri left his hat and stick on the table and sat on the little horse-hair sofa. He looked at the ancient chandelier that he knew so well, at the dingy white paneling, the ancient square piano, the faded silk hangings that had been up ever since he could remember. He stared unseeingly at the paintings of Grandmother and Grandfather Fielding, the precious Malbone portrait of Antoinette's maternal grandmother. He was still conscious of the fact that he had been presumptuous to aspire to all this, even though it now represented a poverty almost as great as his own and a grandeur maintained by infinite resource.

"Henri!" said Miss Antoinette, and Henri sprang to his feet. He came forward and took her hand, very gently, for Antoinette was arthritic.

"You're looking very well, my dear," Henri said.

Antoinette sighed. She was a small, bent, pale woman, excessively slow in her movements. Her thin face, which had been pretty, was still attractive. She had bright blue eyes, and her coquettish expression would have told you instantly that, at sixty-odd, she was still a Southern belle at heart.

"I'm feeling very well," she said. "What a beautiful evening."

"Magnificent," Henri said.

"There is nothing like the Charleston climate."

"And a complexion like yours, Antoinette," Henri said, "is the best proof of that."

"Oh, Henri," Antoinette said.

They sat side by side on the horsehair sofa and Lucy hobbled in with sherry and glasses.

Antoinette poured a glass for each of them, and the fiancés sat sipping the wine and looking at each other. Over the years they had exhausted many topics, but there were always polite inquiries to fill up the blanks.

"And how is Miss Heloise? And the little gyrl?" Antoinette asked.

"They're well, thank you," Henri said. "Leonie, you remember, is coming home the end of next week. I have to go up to her graduation."

"I'll miss you," Antoinette said. "My, my, to think of that child a great big woman out of college!"

"It's been a long time," Henri said. "I can hardly wait to have her home. Perhaps," he went on, "things will be easier for my little Leonie some day. I've just heard that there may be some family money coming to all of us."

"That would be wonderful," said Antoinette.

"If it had only happened twenty years ago, or even sooner, Antoinette," Henri said with a melting look.

"Things never happen at the right time," Antoinette said. "And you and I were born into an unfortunate generation, Henri. But tell me all about it."

Henri made the disclosure as brief as possible. "Of course, I'm too old a bird to be caught with salt on its tail," he said, "but there's a possibility. Just a possibility." And he looked at Antoinette hopefully.

But the best Antoinette could do for him was to say again that it would be wonderful.

"And speaking of legacies," she said, "before I tell you something that I want your advice about, Henri, your speaking of that legacy reminds me that Edmund Calvert came in to see me this afternoon. With Lincoln."

Henri could not imagine what connection this had with his family inheritance, but Antoinette's conversational habits were individual. It was enough for him to know that his rival had been there. He smiled stiffly.

"Oh, yes," he said. "Oh, yes."

"Lincoln is going to farm. Did you know that?"

"You mean right near by?" Henri demanded, shocked at this news, although he had expected the worst.

"He expects to find a farm across the bridge. My, he's grown to be such a handsome boy. I always remember when he was little, and he was sitting in that very chair over there that General Lafayette sat in. He was looking at the portrait of Grandfather Fielding and he said, 'Miss Antoinette, did he wear a cravat under those whiskers?'"

Antoinette laughed a little screaming laugh at the recollection.

"The Calverts," Henri said, indulging in one of his rare witticisms, "were always looking under something."

"Oh, I'll never forget that," Antoinette said, and Henri believed she was referring to his joke until she repeated, "'Did he have a cravat under those whiskers?'" and laughed again.

Henri managed a polite laugh, too.

"And now he's grown up and about to become a farmer," Antoinette said. "I remember when he went North to study. He always wanted to be a farmer. Edmund wanted him to be a lawyer but he said he'd rather be an undertaker. He's very much like Edmund in some ways."

Henri did not consider this the highest praise. "I hope his principles are better," he said flatly.

"Oh, Edmund doesn't mean half of what he says. That reminds me of why I said your talking of that legacy made me think of him. He asked me what I thought of the Southall legacy."

"No doubt he disapproves," Henri said with heavy irony.

"Well, now, that would be asking too much, wouldn't it? He said he felt that it was a nice gesture, and when I asked him if he thought that awful John Brown deserved anything better than hanging he said John Brown was a martyr."

Henri took another sip of sherry. "Antoinette," he said ponderously, "I allow Colonel Calvert a right to his opinions, but that's as far as I'll go. I don't admire his views."

"Very few people do," Antoinette said. "I suppose Lincoln will be over to see your little Leonie. They used to play together, didn't they?"

Apparently, Henri thought, she had forgotten his opposition. "I'd prefer that he didn't," he said.

"Henri," Antoinette said, "don't keep those young people apart because you don't like the Colonel."

"It isn't that I don't like the Colonel! I don't want Leonie to be involved with that boy," Henri said. "But let's not discuss that, Antoinette. What is the other thing you wanted to tell me?"

"Oh, dear," Antoinette said. "I know what I'm going to say will seem perfectly awful to you, and I dread to think what poor Papa would have thought. But you know how I've worried for years about this house. It's simply eating its head off in taxes and repairs. There are a lot of Northern people coming down every year to see Charleston, and some of the better families are taking them in for the season. I've thought of doing that."

Henri was deeply shaken.

"What kind of people?" he asked.

"They would be referred to me by the Woman's Exchange and the Chamber of Commerce," Antoinette said. "It isn't so bad, Henri, when you consider that some very nice people have been taking guests for years. I look upon it, as Cousin Emmy Atchison says, as hospitality. I try to think of it as a civic duty. And it's either that," said poor Miss Antoinette, "or giving up the house. And I can't bear to think of selling my home to strangers."

Henri assumed a judicious pose, his fingertips joined as if in prayer and the index fingers parting and meeting again. "You will have to be careful about your silver," he suggested.

"I'm not so concerned about that," Antoinette said, "as about what people will think. The Fieldings, you know . . ."

"Of course. That has to be considered."

Antoinette sighed. "It goes against my grain, I tell you that. But the roof has to be repaired—there are a lot of tiles loose. I'm told I ought to have the roof replaced with a slate one. I hate to do that. It's just another surrender to this craze for being modern. Like that Mayor Glynn—"

She made a little wry face, and Henri winced slightly. Mayor Glynn was one of their points of disagreement.

"—who's so determined to pave every street in the city. I'll have to pay an assessment on that before very long, I suppose."

"It's the automobiles that are responsible," Henri said. "Our streets were good enough for horses and carriages."

"The old days," Antoinette said, "are going. I knew that Navy Yard would be the end of the old Charleston. You remember what dear Mrs. Ravenel said at the end of her book—"

"Yes," Henri said hastily, "I remember very well." But Antoinette repeated the phrases anyway.

"I remember how dear Papa hated all this change," Antoinette said. "How he hated having electricity put in! Even after that cook from James Island blew the gas out one night and nearly asphyxiated us all. Her name was Amelia."

"Now, about this matter of the visitors," Henri said, for he was no stranger to the fact that once Antoinette got to reminiscing there would be no stopping her. He was thoroughly informed about General Lafayette, President Washington, Mr. Pinckney, Judge King, and all the other notables who had sanctified the chairs and sofas in the house. "It seems to me," he said, "that you might refer to them as 'paying guests.' That would sound a good deal better."

"Yes, I think it would," Antoinette said. "Should I accept the money from them directly? I've never taken money from anyone in my life."

Henri cleared his throat. "I don't know," he said. "How else would you do it?"

"I thought there was a right way to do everything," Antoinette said fretfully. "That's the way I was brought up. And here I find myself without anything to go by. I'm glad of one thing," she added, "and that's that Papa and Mamma didn't live to see it."

Tears came into her eyes, and she sniffled.

"My dear girl," Henri said, "don't distress yourself. I'm sure it can be done with dignity, and there's certainly nothing wrong in adding honestly to your income."

"I don't doubt that you're right, Henri," Antoinette said, dabbing at her eyes, "but I feel it, anyway."

Henri poured himself another glass of sherry and drank rapidly. The wine made him feel more optimistic. He took Antoinette's hand and stroked it.

"Never mind," he said. "Things will turn out better. I have a feeling that perhaps that family money will turn out to be real—"

"But what good can that do me?" Antoinette asked, blushing.

And that, Henri thought, was true. He couldn't do anything for Antoinette. It wouldn't be proper. For a moment he had seen, as if in a dream, Antoinette and himself sitting on a sunny piazza, quite like the piazza of this very house, and ordering gardeners and cooks and maids to do this and that, an eternal bottle of sherry at his

elbow and a large box of the finest cigars within his reach. But the dream wouldn't stay. Marriage—and even in his thoughts he touched the word very delicately—marriage would be impossible at their age. Think of the talk. Think of the crude people like Cousin Julie discussing it and laughing at two old people.

Nevertheless the extra glasses of sherry were stimulating and he was moved to quote a stanza of Omar Khayyam, which he delivered in his rich, deep voice:

“Ah Love, could you and I with Fate conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would we not shatter it to bits—and then
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire”

“If you could only have been an actor, Henri,” Antoinette said admiringly. “You sound just like Papa's description of Salvini.”

Henri would have been willing to listen to more words of the sort. But Antoinette did not linger on the subject of his talents.

“What would I do,” she said musingly, “if some of them turned out to be disagreeable people?”

“Who? Oh, the guests,” Henri said.

“Roistering and all that.”

“I'd have a distinct understanding with them,” Henri said.

Depressed by the evening's *tête-à-tête*, he returned to his house. Before going upstairs, he locked up, saw that the transient tomcat was outside, and then took the old photograph album from the parlor and carried it up to his room.

“That you, Brother?” Heloise called.

“Yes, it's me,” Henri said. He went across the landing into her room. By the light of an oil lamp, which she used for economy, Heloise was reading a novel with a colored picture on the cover.

“Did you have a pleasant visit?”

Henri could never quite avoid the feeling that Heloise was amused at his visits to Antoinette.

“Very nice,” he said. “But I found out two distressing things. In the first place, that Calvert boy is going to stay. He's going to buy a farm.”

“Well,” Heloise said.

"The second thing is, that Antoinette is going to take people into her house."

"You mean she's going to take roomers?"

"From out of town," Henri explained hastily, "and I prefer to think of them as guests. I don't like it."

"Hard times," Heloise said, "make the monkey eat red pepper. I suppose Antoinette Fielding can stand it as well as anyone else."

"I think it's very hard for an elderly gentlewoman," Henri said.

"Maybe so, but I wish we had all that room. I could take in some medical students."

"Sister!" Henri burst out, astonished. "Are you out of your mind? Medical students in the house with Leonie?"

Heloise chuckled. "I suppose that wouldn't do," she admitted.

Henri turned and went across the landing to his room. He, too, lighted an oil lamp, and turned out the gas. He sat down in the little rocker beside the marble-topped bureau (not without a glance at his features in the ancient mirror, which gave back a smudgy yellow image) and opened the photograph album.

There were the first pictures of Leonie, sent by his sister Valerie from Central America, and showing her in the arms of an Indian nurse. Then the first snapshots of Leonie as the small bewildered child who had just made the long trip from Guatemala to take possession of his heart and his life. And there she was in the lacy first communion dress, her dark eyes looking impishly out of the faded cabinet photograph.

There she was, too, on her tricycle, and in the new dress Heloise had made for her to wear on her first day at Miss Low's school, where she had met that Calvert boy . . . beside the Christmas tree with a doll in her arms . . . as a girl of ten, with a big hair ribbon like a propeller at the back of her head, beside one of the old cannon on the Battery . . . at Cousin Clara's on the Island, in a bathing dress, grinning . . .

Henri turned the pages slowly. Leonie in her Memminger School middy blouse. The graduation class picture, with Leonie smaller and prettier than any of the other girls, a great mass of black hair piled on top of her head. And lastly there were the snapshots she had sent from college—Leonie grown into a woman.

"Poor little rascal," Henri murmured. "She's never had the things she ought to have had. Now, if that money would only come our

way, I could send her on trips. Get her away from bad influences . . ."

Specifically, from Lincoln Calvert. Tenderly, Henri laid the album down. If Leonie were taken from him, those pictures would be all he had left of his little girl. His foster-daughter.

And after he had undressed and said his prayers and blown out the lamp and lowered the mosquito netting he crawled into the high-backed bed and kept wondering, until he fell asleep, if there might not be some way to make a better provision for his little Leonie.

Chapter Four

AS BASS SOLOIST at the Cathedral—before the new director's Gregorian mania had put an end to solos—Henri had loved Sunday. Under the new dispensation the joy had gone out of it.

He descended the stairs and went out onto the piazza, sniffing the bright salty morning air. He looked up at the clear sky and picked up the newspaper. The headlines were not exciting.

"Good-morning, Brother," Heloise said, appearing in the doorway.

"Good-morning, Sister."

"It looks like a nice day, as the man said when he was being taken out to be hung."

"The paper says it will be fair and warmer," Henri said matter-of-factly.

"I'm glad to hear that," Heloise said. "Now I know my finery won't be ruined."

The innocent remark irritated Henri.

"My dear Sister," he said, "I wish every day of my life that you had better things. I just can't seem to manage it." *But you spent five cents for those stogies yesterday*, his conscience reminded him.

"I've never complained," Heloise said. "You come in to breakfast now. You'll feel better after a bit to eat."

Henri ate a couple of cold radishes and his sliced bananas and milk. He waited while Heloise served the hominy and a thin slice of ham, put some butter on the hominy and absent-mindedly watched it melt.

"Just think, our little Leonie will be here next Sunday this time," he said.

"What's in the paper?" Heloise inquired.

Henri glared mildly.

"I know the child's coming home," Heloise said.

"It will be a little help and company for you," Henri said. "Seems to me you'd look forward to it."

"What help? And what company?" Heloise demanded. "Leonie hasn't been raised to do anything about the house, and when she goes gadding about she doesn't want a sixty-year-old aunt for company. And another thing, while we're on the subject. You don't always seem to realize this, but when Leonie's home I have to provide a little more luxury. You never wanted her to share our deprivations."

"No," Henri said. "Her life must not be darkened if we can help it."

"Oh, shuh!" Heloise said. "You talk like a rag baby. Now stop mooning about Leonie."

Henri flushed faintly, handed over the newspaper, and devoted his full attention to the hot biscuits and coffee while Heloise read the obituaries and the advertisements.

"Sometimes," she said, putting down the paper with a sigh, "I wish we got a paper with a funny page. I'd like to read about Slim Jim and Buster Brown and Mrs. Rummage."

"But, Sister," Henri said, "those things are for children."

"Well, I like them," Heloise said. "I wish they'd had them when I was a child. Are you going to sing today?"

Henri made a face.

"If you call it *sing*," he said disgustedly. "That woman and her Gregorian music. *Ah-ah-hah-ah*," he vocalized. "I certainly do miss Madame Lavigne. I can't see," he went on, airing one of his favorite complaints, "I can't see for the life of me why they had to bring somebody down from the North to direct music at the Cathedral. And then she has the gall to say that nobody in Charleston can sing."

"Well, why don't you take my advice and go over to St. Mary's? I've told you to many a time."

"St. Mary's is not big enough for my voice. Besides, as I've told you many a time, I can't put Charlie Durand out. He can't sing but he's the bass soloist and I couldn't hurt his feelings."

"Then you'll have to put up with Mrs. Campbell," Heloise said, pouring another cup of coffee. "I'm going to ten o'clock Mass at St. Mary's. It's going to be hot and I won't want to sit fanning myself all through High Mass. It makes my arm ache."

"There's a special collection for the orphan house today," Heloise went on. "I'd like to give a quarter if you think I ought to."

"Certainly," Henri said. "I always think of how poor Leonie might have been in a place like that."

Heloise laughed shortly at this fancy and went upstairs. Henri, with the better part of two hours to kill, finished his coffee slowly and wished for a cigar. Then, sitting out on the piazza, he read dutifully through the paper. "All this talk about the Panama Canal," he muttered at one point. "I suppose they think every ship from the Pacific Ocean is going to stop off at Charleston just to see what the harbor is like."

He read on until he was interrupted by Heloise, who came down dressed for church and clutching a fan and a prayerbook.

"I'm off," she announced. "If I don't see you before you go, remember not to argue with that Mrs. Campbell."

"I won't argue with any woman," Henri replied, "who thinks Wagner was a great composer, when everybody knows perfectly well that his wife wrote all his music."

This, like the certainty that the pearls of Marguerite were always bought at the price of perdition, was one of the iron-clad articles of Henri's musical creed. Wagner, indeed! It was like Mrs. Campbell to go around talking about Wagner.

The more he thought of her the more he became disgusted over what had happened to the Cathedral music. His feeling reached the stage where he left the house without even bothering to gargle or sing "me-me-me" to warm up his vocal cords.

He reached the Cathedral early, and kneeling in the cool organ loft to say his prayers, saw that the nave was almost empty. Cousin Julie, always early, was in the front pew mumbling through her beads, and Miss Aimee Ducasse was a short distance back with her head bent devotionally over, almost touching the rail two pews ahead. On the right of the center aisle Miss Georgie Peters was already half-asleep in Madame Pugno's cushioned pew. They didn't change much, now that they were so old. They had looked just like that in the pro-Cathedral. Henri's memories drifted back still farther to the burning of the old Cathedral. He had been about ten. . . . He had been thirty-three at the time of the Centennial, thirty-six at the time of the earthquake, forty-three during the great cyclone, forty-eight when the Spanish War began, and fifty-one at the time of the Exposition and the passing of the ordinance against spitting.

What a lot a man could see in one lifetime . . . Now, at sixty-four, he was witnessing the overthrow of the Cathedral music at the hands of a Northerner. He felt that he had lived too long.

And now the choir were gathering, nodding to one another as they took their seats and got out their music which had been placed in the racks. In front of Henri was a promising young tenor, Joseph Newman, a rangy, sandy-haired boy from James Island who was a student at the college. He turned around to speak to Henri.

"Good-mornin', Mistuh Lemay. How you, suh?" he inquired, exposing an affliction not common in the vicinity—a speech strongly influenced by Gullah dialect.

"I'm fine, thank you, Joseph," Henri replied.

"Sho' gittin' hot."

"Yes, it's almost summer," Henri said.

Joseph Newman remained twisted around in his seat, a smile on his good-natured red face.

"Yuccum Mis' Campbell," he said. "She and 'e funny Northern talk." He turned to the front again and began to laugh silently at the very idea.

Henri bowed to the director, who nodded coldly and after a few hasty directions seated herself briskly at the organ and began the prelude. Even though he did not like Mrs. Campbell, Henri could never resist music, and he softened a bit toward her. The music led him into reverie, as it often did. He could not have been said, on that Sunday, to pay a great deal of attention to the sacrifice of the Mass; and before long he was engaged with himself in a debate about the wisdom of sending all that money to the lawyers to investigate the family claim to the Lemay fortune. Ten dollars apiece. Thirty dollars . . .

Kyrie eleison. . . . Thirty dollars is a lot of money. *Christe eleison. . . .*

Agnus Dei . . . I wonder if Cousin Julie will go in with us.

Once his meditations became so profound that Mr. Bard, who sat next to him, had to jog his arm to indicate the beginning of the *Sanctus*, and Henri caught Mrs. Campbell's cold gray eye and was momentarily jarred out of his ponderings.

When the postlude was nearly over and the choir filed out and down the narrow curving stairway, he realized that Joseph Newman was beside him and obviously intended to remain there. Henri,

busily nodding to friends, said nothing. Outside on the steps in the brilliant sunshine, Joseph finally spoke.

"Leonie comin' home soon, ain't she?"

Henri looked at the boy sharply. He had been accustomed to advise this young man on breathing and voice placement and had thought of him as a sort of protégé, but merely as a voice. That the boy could have the slightest interest in Leonie had never occurred to him. He hadn't known they were acquainted.

"Yes, my niece will be graduated the end of this week," he said proudly, beginning to descend the steps.

"You think Leonie mind if I come to see her?"

"I have no way—" Here Henri checked himself. He was about to say that he could not tell what his niece would like or would not like, and then he thought that perhaps this would sound rude. "I suppose you'd better ask her," he said.

Joseph was not subtle in his methods. He followed Henri around the corner, his loose coat flapping.

"I was wonderin' if Leonie is engaged," he said. "If she is, I wouldn' want to git een de way."

"As far as I know," Henri said, a little stiffly, for he felt that this bordered on impertinence, "my niece is not engaged."

Joseph sighed deeply.

"Thank you, suh," he said. "I—I hope I kin come roun' and hear you sing and talk about singin'. I like to git your advice about a thing or two."

Henri stopped short to give this his attention. There was not the slightest doubt in his mind that he could be of considerable help to this young man in a vocal way. He would not have had such a doubt if Caruso made the suggestion.

"I'll be glad to give you all the help I can," he said. "There is a difference between tenors and basses, but after all the principles of good singing are the same for everyone. Proper breathing," he said, expanding to demonstrate the use of the diaphragm, "and the relaxed jaw." He lowered his, revealing a cavernous mouth and throat.

At that moment Miss Julie came around the corner. Alarmed at seeing her cousin in this stricken posture, she hastened up to see if she could give any assistance. Henri, perceiving her, closed his mouth and stood looking rather foolish.

"Good-morning, Cousin Julie," he said.

"Oh, you all right?" Miss Julie inquired, with perhaps a touch of disappointment. "I was afraid you were having a fit the way you were gaping. It reminded me of the time Tante Phil—"

"My young friend," Henri said, "was asking me about singing. Mrs. Sharp, this is Mr. Joseph Newman. He sings in the choir."

"How you do, ma'am?" Joseph inquired, pleasantly, but without grace.

Miss Julie acknowledged the introduction. "Newman," she muttered reflectively. "I suppose you're Sally Blair's boy, the one that married Frank Newman and went to live on James Island?"

"Yessum," Joseph said. "You know my ma?"

"Very well indeed," said Miss Julie. "You give her my best respects, young man."

Joseph bowed clumsily, replaced his ridiculous straw hat, and lumbered away.

"Good gracious!" Miss Julie exclaimed, gazing after his departing form. "That's country-come-to-town or I never saw it. That boy looks like a clotheshorse. His mother was a pretty girl, too."

"I knew her," Henri said. "Joseph is a very talented young singer."

"Well, you never can tell by people's outsides," Miss Julie said, "what they can do." It was as if she had said, "Now look at you, for instance," and Henri felt a little jerk of irritation.

"Have you thought over that matter?" he asked her. "Or talked about it with Henry?"

"I've talked it over with Henry," Miss Julie said, "and I've decided to put in my share. I'll have to go tomorrow to get it out of the savings bank. I think I have ten dollars and if I haven't I'll borrow the rest from Annette. Although I distinctly don't approve of borrowing. Neither a borrower nor a lender be."

Henri did not retort, for he did not believe that this could be meant for him. "Does Henry approve of this, then?" he inquired.

"What's that got to do with it?" Miss Julie demanded. "Henry O'Donnell never thinks anybody outside of his family could ever have any money. The gall of it, when his father was poor as Job's turkey! No, his advice was against it. That's what decided me in favor of it."

"But—" Henri said.

Miss Julie wagged an emphatic finger at him. "I had enough of Henry's advice years ago. I asked him about that automobile stock,

you remember, and he told me not to buy it. It went up to about three times what I'd have had to pay for it. And that scoundrel Moore ran off with me money besides. That's what I think of Henry O'Donnell and his advice."

"Perhaps you're right," Henri said.

"I'll get the money and you can send it to Eugenie Poiron," said Miss Julie. "But you'd better get a receipt for it, that's all I have to say. Eugenie Poiron!" she repeated, still quivering under the slight that relative had made her suffer. "And when you write to her, just tell her for me that I don't in the least appreciate her treatment. If it wasn't that I'd like to leave my sons something, I'd wash my hands of the whole business just to spite her. And now I must be running along. Give me love to Heloise and the child."

Henri replaced his Panama and set off for home. Cousin Julie's reasoning, perhaps because he was a member of the same family, did not seem strange to him. Henry O'Donnell had been wrong about the automobile stock. It was entirely possible that he could be wrong about this matter, too. In fact, it seemed more and more logical to Henri that he *must* be wrong about it. Just because Henry O'Donnell had made a success of business, that did not give him any right to dictate to other people.

"I'm going to send that money," Henri said to himself with indignant forcefulness, "no matter whether Henry O'Donnell likes it or not."

At dinner, a frugal combination of soup meat, okra and tomatoes, and the eternal rice, Henri again brought up the question of the lawyer's fees.

"I saw Cousin Julie after Mass," he said, "and she said she had made up her mind to send that ten dollars."

"Cousin Julie said that?" Heloise asked in some surprise.

"I can see that you don't take any stock in it," Henri said, slicing the half of a raw onion he ate every day for his health, and beginning to crunch a slice thoughtfully.

"Not any more than I take any stock in the pot of gold at the foot of the rainbow. But if your heart's set on it, Brother, why, you won't be happy until you've sent in your share, I can see that."

Henri sat erect in sullen dignity.

"You talk as if it were some sort of pleasure I was bound to have."

he said. "I think you will agree that I've never sought for myself. But do you think it's fair to Leonie—"

"There's no use arguing with me, Brother. You go ahead and do what you think is right. After all, the legacy might be enough to buy Leonie a trousseau."

"I don't like joking about that subject," Henri said crossly.

"I'm not joking," Heloise said. "You know the girl's going to get married one of these days. At least I hope she is."

"Plenty of time for that. Leonie's only a child."

Heloise looked humorously exasperated but said nothing.

"We must try to find a suitable match for her when the time comes," Henri proceeded, taking a spoonful of dessert, which was a confection known in the family as *pain perdu*—bread pudding with a few raisins for adornment. "And I forgot to mention this, but there's a young man in the choir whose mother I used to know. Joseph Newman. He has a fine tenor voice and he wants to come and call on Leonie."

"I suppose he will serenade her," Heloise said.

"He seems to be a rather good young fellow. Sally Blair's son. He has a bit of Gullah in his speech," Henri said, pitching it mildly.

"Leonie will probably ridicule him," Heloise said. "Sally Blair's son. Your old sweetheart, wasn't she? Brother, I hope you're not going to try to force young men on Leonie because you think they're suitable. She will fall in love with someone you never heard of and probably won't like."

"We must try to influence her in a sensible way," Henri said.

After Heloise had gone to visit an elderly friend in need of gossip and consolation, Henri wandered restlessly around the house. He did not want to go to the band concert at Hampton Park, there was no one he felt like visiting, and music was never performed in the Lemay house on Sunday, a severe deprivation.

However, Henri could not resist trying his voice. He wandered into the parlor, which because of the small size of the house also served as a sitting room, and opened the lid of the ancient piano. He struck a yellowed key and a wheezy groan came from behind the red silk which covered the fretwork panel. He sang down the scale to his lowest tones and was reassured.

"Magnificent!" was his judgment, and he broke precedent still

more by singing a few measures of an air from *The Magic Flute*. Then, firmly, he closed the piano.

He toyed with the plaster figurines above it, wound the old imitation marble clock on the mantelpiece, and arranged a cushion on the horsehair sofa. At one place in the maroon wallpaper there was a loose spot, and he tried it with one finger to see if it would peel off. Then, weary of puttering, he thought he might enjoy a game of Canfield.

Here there was a matter of conscience. Playing cards on Sunday was a moot point. The brief debate ended as usual, Henri taking the position that, after all, it was not actually gaming, since no one else was participating. He got out the tattered deck and set out the game on the dining room table.

The first game did not go well, and Henri set out another. Things began to look good, and he saw that he could win if he had that seven of spades he had already buried.

The most honest man in Charleston paused to weigh the pros and cons of rigging a game which, after all, was strictly his own affair. But he finally decided that a man of honor could not cheat, even at solitaire.

Wearying of the game after several losses, he took out the notes on his family which he was making for Mrs. Cobb, a historically minded lady who intended some day to write a book on the subject of the Santo Domingan refugees, and wrote a page or so in his beautiful copper-plate hand concerning the activities of his Grandfather Lemay.

"Pious and scrupulous," he wrote in the best memoir style, "Robert-Marie Lemay was a careful husbandman and was able to pass on to his eldest son, George, a flourishing and well-managed plantation on the Edisto River which the latter was unfortunately not able to maintain after the War, and which has gradually passed into other hands.

"His other children, Caroline, Suzanne, Frederick, and Leon emigrated to the Middle West and the Far West. . . ."

As Cousin Julie had said, there were a lot of Lemays. All those cousins out West, for instance. They would all share in the money. Probably, too, some of them would back out of making their rightful contributions, and this was galling to contemplate. Nevertheless he would have to send that thirty dollars to Cousin Eugenie.

There might be some way to economize further in order to make up for it. . . .

Henri took from the cupboard drawer his phonograph record catalogues, which he knew almost by heart, and the carefully written list of records he intended to buy one of these days. After poring over them for a while, regretfully he expunged several of the more expensive items—the “Sextette” from *Lucia*, which cost seven dollars; two Plançon discs he could perhaps do without—this saved another ten dollars—and several by Patti and Tamagno.

He noted with a sense of virtuous sacrifice that the total exceeded thirty dollars.

Chapter Five

TWO HOURS AFTER the hucksters had awakened him with their bawling, Henri was on his way to work. As usual, he encountered Mr. Bell, the rheumatic street sweeper, languidly propelling his brush, and listened to his daily complaint about his feet.

"I've tried everything, suh," he said dolefully. "I've tried washing my feet and not washing 'em, and I've soaked 'em in everything you could think of, and still they hurt. I wish I was as spry as you, Mr. Lemay."

Pleased to be thought so spry, Henri proceeded up Wentworth Street. At the corner of Meeting he met Colonel Beecham.

Colonel Beecham was a tall, stately old man in a black frock coat and string tie and a battered Panama. He had a white beard and extremely blue eyes and Henri had heard somebody say that he looked like Walt Whitman. He preferred to think that the Colonel looked like Merlin in *Idylls of the King*. From what he had heard of Walt Whitman's poetry, he did not think it was fitting to compare a gentleman to him.

"Good-morning, Colonel," Henri said.

"Good-morning, Henri. Pleasant day."

"Very pleasant. I haven't seen you lately, Colonel."

"I've been under the doctor," said the Colonel. "I caught cold over on Edisto two weeks ago when I was bird-watching."

"I'm sorry to hear it."

"Well, I'm getting a bit old," said the Colonel, his voice quavering the least bit. "Can't stand exposure the way I used to. But it was worth it. I was able to report," he said, swelling visibly with justifiable pride, "the very first visit to these shores—at least the very first ever recorded—of the Tennessee nuthatch."

"I congratulate you," Henri said.

"It will be recorded in the annals of the Museum," Colonel

Beecham said. "Every little discovery counts for the culture of our city, you know."

"True," Henri said. "Good-bye, Colonel." He touched his hat.

The familiar smell of drays and horses came to his nostrils as he turned the corner. Several gigantic stevedores were lounging near a wharf. There was a strong smell of salt, and the eternal piledriver was hammering piles into the mud. The sun was bright on East Bay, and before long, Henri knew, it would be beating into the Perfection Stationery Company.

With a brief greeting to William, the porter, he made his way to the back of the store, climbed the stairway to the little office, changed into his mohair office jacket, and gave a final twist to his mustaches. He took down a file of statements, opened one of the big ledgers, and began his week.

He knew that Mrs. Emmons would be late, and he had the first batch of statements ready for her when she arrived. He heard her loud laugh as she greeted William, her bustling footsteps, and there she was, fat, red-haired and noisy.

"How you this mornin', Mr. Lemay?"

"Good-morning, Mrs. Emmons. I'm fine, thank you."

"They say you're gointa be rich."

"I don't care to discuss it at present," Henri said.

Mrs. Emmons flung herself into her chair and began to rattle the typewriter in a way that suggested she was making up for lost time. She kept up a steady flow of conversation.

"You hear about the smallpox case on Church Street, Mr. Lemay? People say Dr. White didn't have no business to let him stay there. The trouble with this town—if you got one of the old names they let you do anything. That Mr. What's-his-name on Church Street, I don't care who he is, he ought to be in the pesthouse. How they goin' to keep smallpox from spreadin' when they let a man stay right on Church Street with a case of it?"

Henri said he didn't know.

"I was talking to Colonel Calvert about it," said Mrs. Emmons. "He's a sweet old thing. He told me I reminded him of a fire among the ruins. My red hair, you know. People say all sorts of things about him, like he's a nigger-lover, and they say he got a lot of wild ideas but I like him. You ever see that nephew of his, Lincoln's his name?"

The one that's been up North to that agricultural college? He's a heart-breaker, that boy. I bet he won't be single long."

"Indeed," Henri said, but the remark made him uneasy.

"No girl," said Mrs. Emmons flatly, "could possibly resist that boy." She rolled her eyes. "Well, here comes Mr. Peterson. I wish I didn't have to work today. These first few days of heat make me feel no-account."

"We Charlestonians," Henri said, hoping she would understand that he was ostracizing her, "never pay any attention to the warm weather. It always cools off when the breeze strikes in the afternoon."

"Maybe you're right," said Mrs. Emmons, "but I always sweat from May to September."

Overjoyed to escape, Henri went down the stairs to have the usual Monday morning talk with his employer.

Mr. Peterson was a large, bulky man in his fifties, with a drooping mustache, full red cheeks, bulbous blue eyes, a large corporation draped with a heavy gold chain, and a voice to match his proportions. He boomed out a morning salutation and tossed the stump of his cigar into a spittoon. "Come on in, Mr. Lemay."

Henri entered the little cubicle and sat down. Mr. Peterson lighted a fresh cigar without offering one and proceeded to unburden his mind.

"You know we got to take inventory this month, Mr. Lemay," he said. "The stock is pilin' up. Them ledgers there, for instance, is all too big. We got to ship some back or lower the price. And there's them fancy boxes of writin' paper catchin' dust. I got a scheme for them. We'll make a little display in the window, and alongside of each box we'll put a *envelop* and a sheet of paper with your writin' on 'em. Jist half a dozen or so. Course, that'll spoil the boxes, but we kin mark 'em down twenty-five cents or so. Some people," Mr. Peterson added, "would jist shet 'em up again and not say a word. But you been with me a good many years, Mr. Lemay, and you know no customer of mine ever been cheated."

"Very true," Henri said.

"I ain't a fool," said Mr. Peterson, "and I know people say I'm tight-fisted and graspin' and all that, but none of 'em kin say I ain't honest."

Henri nodded. He was so accustomed to this Monday morning re-creation of the Pharisee in the parable that he hardly listened to it.

"I always treated you well, Mr. Lemay, didn't I? Even when you left me that time and then found that it wasn't so easy for a new company to git business, eh?"

"I've always tried to show my appreciation, Mr. Peterson," Henri said, writhing.

"What I always say, Mr. Lemay," said Mr. Peterson, accurately, for he said it about once a day, "is that honesty is the best policy."

"A good principle, Mr. Peterson," Henri said.

Mr. Peterson seemed to have exhausted his self-adulation for the time being. He asked Henri if he had any suggestions.

"No, I haven't," Henri said.

"Well, then, you jist write them letters when you git a chance," Mr. Peterson instructed him. "Jist a few samples."

Henri cleared his throat.

"You said it would be all right for me to leave Friday afternoon to go to my niece's graduation."

Mr. Peterson frowned.

"That leaves me all alone Friday afternoon and Saturday mornin'," he said, "but if I gave my word, Mr. Lemay, that's all there is to it. I know you'll make up the time, Mr. Lemay. Now, if you'll ask Mis' Emmons to come down I got to dictate a few letters. You kin take my place out front until I finish."

Henri summoned Mrs. Emmons and took his place in the shop. There was not much to do except stand. The Perfection Company catered to small business, of which there was a lot in Charleston, and small business seemed to be dormant most of the time. During his substitution for Mr. Peterson, Henri sold two dozen pen nibs, took an order for a hundred and fifty printed blotters, and handed out a bottle of indelible ink and a package of index cards.

Mr. Peterson came out to handle the rush, and Henri prepared to hear a résumé of his correspondence.

"One of these fellows is tryin' to persuade me to handle his self-fillin' fountain pens," said Mr. Peterson. "I told him no. I don't want any of that new-fangled stuff. Who calls 'em self-fillin', anyway? You got to move the lever, ain't you? Give me a good old Esterbrook stub in a wooden holder any day."

Agreeing that fountain pens were not all they were cracked up to be, Henri returned to his accounts. Mrs. Emmons was hammering away at the noisy typewriter, but she paused for a few comments.

"Some people think the city ought to buy the Water Works. You think so, Mr. Lemay?"

"I don't know," Henri replied, having greater affairs on his mind.

"They say the city tryin' too much. They say all this paving goin' to cost money and make the contractors rich."

"As far as I'm concerned," Henri said, "they can leave my street and sidewalk just the way they are."

Monday was Heloise's busy day. She sorted the clothes for the washerwoman, laid out new sheets, superintended Queenie's hasty bedmaking and dusting, and went to the Market to make her purchases, which were, to say the least, careful—slightly bruised vegetables and cheaper cuts of meat and a dozen specked bananas which she bought for five cents.

On her way home she gazed in a few shop windows without the least hope of ever buying what she saw. In fact, her mind was on money-saving devices—the rags she had been collecting, a stack of medicine bottles, a pile of newspapers. When she reached home she told Queenie to watch out for the bottle and rags man, mended a neckband, darned socks, and polished the parlor furniture. She had a look at the tiny vegetable patch behind the kitchen, sprinkled the petunias, picked off the morning glories and the dead honeysuckle, and went in to parcel out the food for dinner.

By this time she felt she had earned a bit of leisure, and she sat down to play the piano. Heloise's repertoire was a wide one, from Chopin nocturnes and waltzes through salon pieces and popular songs of the day, all of which she played by ear.

Having expressed herself sufficiently through music, she sat down to read before dinner, the book being *Miss Billy* by Eleanor H. Porter, lent to her by one of the Garrison girls. Heloise found the novel enthralling, since Billy (who turned out to be a girl, to the consternation of the bachelor guardians with whom she was going to live) had a sweet voice and one of the guardians was a musician. Heloise only wished that the wards of bachelor guardians were quite as easy to manage in real life.

She did not read long, because she wanted to make the book last. She would have read a great many more books than she did, but Lighthart's rental library charged two cents a day and she did not feel that she ought to indulge in this extravagance.

Henri left the office at twelve-thirty. As he did not want anyone to guess where he was going, he took a roundabout way to upper King Street. Furtively, he ascended the crazy wooden stairs of a small building and stood before the dingy glass-paneled door which bore the legend *H. Pincus. Please Knock.*

Henri knocked briskly and entered. The office, which he knew only too well, was a dingy room, the walls covered with fly specks and the tables and shelves covered with dust. Mr. H. Pincus, a rheumy-eyed little man in shirtsleeves, sat before an indescribably littered roll-top desk scratching away with a pen.

"Howdy, Mr. Lemay," he said. "I'm glad to see you."

Henri, who did not care for Mr. Pincus, replied gruffly.

"It's good to see a man like you come in, Mr. Lemay," Mr. Pincus said. "Somebody I don't have to worry about when he borrows a few dollars." He put on his best imitation of a smile. "And what can I do for you today, suh?"

"I'd like to borrow thirty dollars," Henri said.

"With you, it's a pleasure," said Mr. Pincus. "How long you want the money?"

"Six months."

"Six months," Mr. Pincus repeated. "At twenty per cent. That's thirty-six dollars." He took a slip of paper and wrote out the figures. Henri, after signing, offered to give security.

"Now, Mr. Lemay," said Mr. Pincus, "I don't need no pledge from you." He opened a drawer and counted out thirty dollars in worn bills from a pile which made Henri's head swim. "I wish I was as sure of getting back every dollar I lend." He grinned knowingly.

"Thank you, Pincus," Henri said pocketing the bills, "and good-bye."

He descended, stood in the entry until he was certain no acquaintance was passing, and then hurried home to dinner.

As soon as Cousin Julie turned in her share and gave him the list of the Lemays, he would go to the Postoffice and buy a money order, and Leonie's share of that legacy would be provided for. Now there was only the problem of the money for his trip to Baltimore, and that could come out of the savings account which Heloise kept.

Everybody, he was convinced, knew about that legacy. He half-

expected to be asked, from now on, to invest in stocks and contribute to worthy causes.

That none of these things happened may be explained by the fact that Charleston was a very unimaginative city, and slow to credit, though quick to spread, any rumor of the unusual.

Chapter Six

FROM THE MOMENT the girls, in their long robes and looking wilted under the hot Baltimore sun, marched in to take their seats under the oaks and sycamores, Henri felt as if he were going to burst. Here was the culmination of an adventure.

Out of almost nothing, he and Heloise had accomplished this. They had triumphed over poverty, and they had defied custom; girls of Leonie's group rarely earned college diplomas. And, although she was neither salutatorian nor valedictorian and had won no medals, Henri was the proudest relative there. When the Cardinal, awarding the diplomas, read out "Leonie Lemay Hughes, *cum laude*," he was in ecstasy.

"Magnificent!" he rumbled. "Magnificent!" At the sight of her small, brisk figure moving across the platform, tears of pride and affection came into his eyes and he was obliged to take out his handkerchief and blow his nose.

When the ceremonies had ended, he went up to find his treasure. Leonie Hughes was, like her uncle, a very small specimen of humanity. She was slender, erect, and rapid in her movements. Her creamy brunette complexion and her flashing black eyes were topped by a wealth of glossy black hair. Excitement lent a glow to her, and when she hugged Henri almost fiercely he felt his ribs crack.

"You looked lovely," Henri said, his eyes filling up again. "You're the prettiest one of them all."

"I've already told you that you're the most distinguished-looking of all the men," Leonie said, looking at her uncle's white suit, his impeccable mustaches, and his carefully roached hair.

"Now, now, none of your flattery," Henri said with a deprecating deep laugh, but he automatically assumed an even more erect posture.

"I don't want too many of these girls to see you," Leonie told him. "It'll make them all dissatisfied with the boys back home."

"You little rascal," Henri said. "Aren't you ashamed to make fun of an old gentleman like me?" But he beamed at her.

"I promised Aunt Heloise I'd keep an eye on you. And now I've got to line up for the class photograph. I'll meet you over in front. Here, you talk to Mrs. McDevitt. Mrs. McDevitt—"

A woman in white, who reminded Henri of a battleship, turned and smiled at Leonie.

"Mrs. McDevitt, this is my uncle, Mr. Lemay," Leonie said.

Mrs. McDevitt acknowledged the introduction with stately restraint, and Henri bowed. Mrs. McDevitt prepared to speak.

"My daughter and Leonie have been great friends," she said in a thick Virginia accent. "I do hope the end of their career here—" Henri listened carefully for her drawl made it difficult for him to understand without close attention—"isn't going to mean the end of the friendship. You must let us have Leonie now and then."

She spoke in the tone of a woman to whom a little trip to Virginia and back was a mere matter of arrangement.

"Thank you, ma'am," Henri said. "I'm sure Leonie would consider it a privilege to visit you."

"Charleston and Richmond," said Mrs. McDevitt oracularly, "are not so very far apart."

Henri agreed. He wondered if he ought to return the invitation, and what Mrs. McDevitt would make of their house on Coming Street. He told himself, sternly, that what was good enough for his family was good enough for the McDevitts, even if Mrs. McDevitt's rings were genuine, or for anyone else.

A large man of middle years, obviously nourished on the same satisfying fare as Mrs. McDevitt, came charging up the path, and Mrs. McDevitt summoned him.

"Jefferson, come over and talk to Mr. Lemay. My husband, Mr. Lemay. . . . His niece," she explained as the gentlemen shook hands, "is that darling little black-eyed girl, Leonie Hughes. You've heard Estella speak of her."

Mr. McDevitt's beefy features expressed nothing but bewilderment at the mention of any individual girl, but his Southern instincts were equal to such a difficulty.

"Lovely little lady," he declared. "You are going right back home, Mr. Lemay?"

"Yes, sir," Henri said. "My sister hasn't seen our Leonie since

last October and I'm going to take her right back to Charleston."

"Oh, you are from Charleston, suh." Henri thought the pair looked somewhat surprised at Leonie's not having been home for Christmas, but he did not want to travel under false pretenses, and the sooner the McDevitts realized that he was far from affluent the better.

"We are taking Estella up to New York," Mrs. McDevitt announced solemnly, "before we go to the beach and then to the mountains."

"You have a fine beach in Charleston, suh," said Mr. McDevitt. "I caught some fine bullhead whitin' there one fall. You live on the Battery, suh?"

"No, sir," Henri replied. "We live up on Coming Street. I hope you'll pay us a visit the next time you come to Charleston."

There was a commotion as the girls began to return, and Leonie came up arm in arm with a hoydenish red-haired young woman, who, it turned out, was Estella McDevitt.

"Uncle Henri and I have to look around a bit more," Leonie said, "and then we're going to dinner before we catch our train."

The McDevitts said good-bye very heartily, and while the girls were embracing, Mrs. McDevitt urged Henri and Leonie to remember the invitation to come up to Richmond, after which she steamed away with the others in tow.

"Well, my little one," Henri said, "how does it feel to be a bachelor of arts?"

"I almost feel important," Leonie said. "Here, see my diploma."

"Don't unroll it," Henri said. "I want to have it framed."

"You're going to show me off, Uncle."

"We're very proud of you," Henri said. He indicated the campus, where little knots of people, each surrounding a graduate, were moving around. "I suppose you're going to miss all this."

"Maybe so," Leonie said, "but right now I'd like to see the Battery and my darling old Aunt Heloise more than anything else. I've got a lot to make up. Four years away, with just summer at home, is a long time. Now I'll go get ready and we can say good-bye to Sister Immaculata."

She left Henri in the sitting room with his thoughts. Looking at the throngs of girls and their relatives coming and going, he felt sorry for Leonie, with no female relative to help her over the details

of leave-taking. As often in the past, he had a sense of having deprived the child of something which could never be compensated.

"Well, there you are," Leonie said, interrupting his regretful meditations. "I was afraid one of the girls might steal you."

She was wearing a gray coat suit with a voluminous long skirt that covered all but the tips of her high-laced brown shoes. A ruffled shirtwaist, long gloves, and a hard-brimmed traveling hat completed the costume, which made her look for all the world like a small girl dressed up. She indicated the small bag at her side.

"Everything's packed and the luggage is checked and we're all ready to see Sister Immaculata," she declared. "Let's go and get it over with."

Henri took her bag and they walked over to the main building. They waited their turn for a few minutes and then entered the office, where Sister Immaculata sat at her desk. The president was a tall and masterful-looking nun; perhaps because of the strain of the last few days her expression was weary and fretful. She said politely that Leonie would be missed.

"Leonie has great possibilities, Mr. Lemay. I only hope she isn't going to forget *us*. She has a fine mind, and I'm going to remember her in my prayers. I'll ask Our Blessed Lady to watch over her." She turned to Leonie, who sat in embarrassment at these commendations. "Leonie, my dear child, always remember that if you want any advice you can always write to me. And now good-bye, my dear child, and God bless you."

She embraced Leonie, said a pleasant word or two to Henri, who bowed, and they were ushered out.

"A fine woman," Henri said, feeling called upon to make a pronouncement.

Leonie shrugged. "I suppose so. But she's narrow, and she can be very catty, too." She took Henri's arm. "Now, Uncle," she said, "we can have some time to ourselves and talk. I want to hear about everything."

Until that afternoon, Henri had not eaten in a restaurant in years. Not since he had first brought Leonie to college. To impress Leonie with his worldly wisdom, he was masterful toward the waiter and finicky in his choice of dishes, and although the hotel's food was moderately priced, he managed to run up a substantial bill.

"I wish Auntie could be here," Leonie said. "She loves going places."

"She insisted that I was the one to come."

"It would have been wonderful if you could both have come. Uncle, wouldn't it be simply marvelous if all that money really was coming to us? We could go everywhere and you and Auntie could have all sorts of things."

Henri, roused from his absorption in the creamed chicken and its cost, nodded.

"Even if we don't get *that* money," Leonie said, "I'm going to find a way to make some. I've even thought of journalism or writing stories."

"I wouldn't like you to be a reporter," Henri said. "It isn't a very dignified kind of work for a lady."

"Well, I can be dignified enough in Charleston," Leonie said. "Dignified! Uncle, there you go putting on the heavy Southern aristocrat again."

"Dignity," Henri explained patiently, "is something nobody can do without."

"Of course," Leonie said with gentle scorn, "I could be a teacher. That's a dignified occupation for poor buckras." But her expression plainly showed that she had no intention of improving the young. "Estella McDevitt thinks she's going to teach physical training."

"H'm," Henri said, glad that his Leonie had no such ideas. He asked the question uppermost in any proper Charleston mind. "Who are these McDevitts, Leonie? Are they related to the people who used to live on Ashley Avenue?"

Leonie considered the question. "Oh, you mean the ones with that old broken-down carriage that they rode around in until it almost came apart on King Street? No, these aren't the same McDevitts at all. They have lots of money."

Henri shrugged off the money. "And what does this gentleman do?" he inquired.

"I never could quite find out," Leonie said. "Estella's sort of close-mouthed about it. I think, though, that he's a gambler."

"You mean," Henri asked, quivering, "that they accepted a gambler's daughter at St. Catherine's College?"

"I suppose they had the money to pay."

"I'm afraid living in the North has influenced you to think about

things a little differently," Henri said. "No one in the Lemay family ever associated with gamblers. I hope this gyrl hasn't taught you cyard games."

"Now, Uncle, I didn't say Estella was a gambler, did I? It isn't something you inherit."

"Well, I don't know," Henri said, considerably shaken. "I should think that would put an end to any idea of your going to visit them. I don't think your aunt would allow it."

"Everybody in Charleston is so righteous," Leonie said. "And as for what you say about 'living in the North,' people in Baltimore consider themselves Southerners."

"But they have no right to," Henri said stiffly. "They're just getting above themselves."

"Northerners," Leonie said, anxious to divert the argument into which she invariably got whenever she and her uncle had a discussion, "have funny ideas about Southern life. There was a girl from Philadelphia, Anna O'Halloran, and she said to me that it must be wonderful to live on those big plantations."

"You must remember," Henri said, "that they haven't had our opportunities for culture."

"There were one or two fairly nice girls from Boston," Leonie said. "I think they were related to the Lowell and Cabot families, or so they said."

"I never heard of either," Henri said. "I suppose they are rich mill-owners."

"They seemed to have nice manners."

"Of course, there must be exceptions," Henri admitted, but not without a doubtful intonation. "And, speaking of Northerners, Miss Antoinette is going to have paying guests in her house."

"That sounds like a good idea. She needs the money, and there's certainly no use of her rattling around that great big empty house."

"She's worried about what people will say."

"Everybody gets back to that," Leonie said. "What will people say? I certainly wouldn't care one teeny bit what they said about me."

"That's the way you feel when you're young," Henri said, "but when you get older you begin to have some respect for your neighbors' opinions."

He paid the check and left a twenty-five-cent tip for the waiter

and they went. Retrieving Leonie's bag and his valise from the checkroom he paid another dime, marveling at the extravagant customs of Baltimore.

He put up his stick to hail a cab, and they drove off to the Union Station and got on their train.

"I love trains," Leonie said. "That feeling of settling down in the seat and waiting to be rolled away somewhere. If I had the money I'd travel all over the world. There's a girl in our class from Chicago. Her father made a lot of money in the meat-packing business and they've been to London and Paris and Italy and Germany and even to China and Japan."

"That might be very pleasant," Henri admitted. "You know, when I was young I thought of being a professional singer and traveling all around the country."

"And how is your voice, Uncle?"

"I don't get much of a chance to use it. This Northern woman who's taken the place of Madame . . . I believe you know about her. She says nobody in Charleston can sing, and she likes a lot of Gregorian music and of course there's no chance for any solo singing in that."

He had rather hoped to get started on a discussion of singing, but Leonie didn't give him the opportunity.

"I feel now as if I didn't know anybody any longer. And yet it doesn't seem real that I've finished my four years of college."

Henri cleared his throat. "It has seemed like a long time to us," he told her, and he added a hint. "Your aunt and I have been looking forward to having you with us for a while. It's been lonely without you."

"I don't want to be dependent on you and Auntie all my life," Leonie said impulsively. "I want to do something for myself."

"Anything we have done for you," Henri said, "was done willingly and gladly. We'd give you more if we could."

He stared out of the window, moodily regarding the passing telegraph poles and the mysterious patches of water and clumps of trees. "I suppose you'd like more money," he said. "And I'm sorry there was no graduation gift."

"I didn't expect it. Cousin Henry O'Donnell sent me a pair of pearl earrings. I forgot to tell you about them, I guess."

"That was very generous of him," Henri said, but for some reason

he did not like it. Henry O'Donnell, in his opinion, was purse proud.

"And I had a present from Cousin Julie," Leonie said, laughing. "A little box of Canton ginger."

"From Cousin Julie," Henri said gravely, "that represents a great deal. I don't think you ought to ridicule the gift she sent you, no matter how small. She is very poor."

Leonie flushed. "I didn't mean that. I meant it was characteristic of her to send something to eat."

Henri did not reply. He took out his ancient silver watch and consulted it. "Perhaps you'd like a bit of supper in the dining cyar. We ought to get to sleep early if we're going to be waked at four."

"I'm always hungry. Maybe I'm a little bit like Cousin Julie."

"I hope you'll be like your Cousin Julie in one respect. She's always been contented. Your Aunt Heloise, too."

Leonie accepted the rebuke in good part. "You don't need to worry about me, Uncle. I'm not going to run up bills at Kerrison's until that Lemay fortune is divided up."

Henri wished Leonie had never been told of that money. It was bound to have a bad effect on her. He didn't want her to feel that money was everything.

Nevertheless, it occupied a large place in his thoughts as he paid the check for supper, tipped the waiter, and anticipated the porter's tip in the morning and the hack fare from the depot to their house.

Chapter Seven

SUNDAY WAS HOT. The long summer had begun in earnest. The lemon figs were ripening, small boys were catching June bugs and tying them to strings, mosquito nets were neatly looped up over the beds, and bamboo porch screens had made their appearance. The afternoon was deadly still. In the dining room, Henri was puttering with his record catalogues. Heloise had gone to vespers. Upstairs, Leonie was reading Omar Khayyam.

She had put in a long day. Beginning with breakfast in bed, she had gone to Mass at the Cathedral with her uncle, who had abandoned the choir in order to sit proudly with her in the nave. After Mass she had greeted Cousin Julie and Joseph Newman and other friends. After dinner there had been a stream of visitors, full of such worn expressions as "And to think this is the little girl who—" and "I suppose the next thing we hear will be news of an engagement," and still more full of genealogy. Leonie was tired.

From time to time she put the volume of Omar Khayyam on her lap and looked around the room in which, except for thirty-odd months of college, she had spent all the life she could clearly remember.

It was the back room, for the front bedchamber, where her grandmother and grandfather had breathed their last, had not seemed fitting for a child. And the back room being small to begin with, Henri had caused it to be extended over the piazza, and in a fit of extravagance for which he paid heavily afterwards had furnished it in bird's-eye maple and had it papered in a bright blue and pink chintz pattern now only slightly stained where the leaks were. One of these formed the figure of a man shaking his finger in admonition, and Leonie had always identified it with her uncle.

Much of the walls was covered—there were pictures of Leonie's father and mother whom she barely recalled, an oil painting of her own of very stiff-looking oranges, a print of Hoffmann's "Christ," a

large sampler wrought by her grandmother, urging the beholder to honor his father and his mother. There were pennants, a large and cheerless engraving of the Coliseum by moonlight, Leonie's high school diploma, the high school class photograph, and, as a souvenir of childhood, a large lithograph of a child crossing a perilously narrow log bridge over a deep stream and being guided by her guardian angel.

The excessive familiarity of all these things made Leonie feel now as if her absence had been a dream. She had been looking forward to her return, but now she began to feel trapped. It was difficult to get away from Charleston unless you were rich, and she hadn't much faith in her Uncle Henri's dream of getting that money from his French relative.

She heard her Aunt Heloise come in the front door, cheerful as usual, and, a thing Leonie had not noticed before, a trifle noisy in her energetic way. Aunt Heloise, Leonie thought, didn't really belong in Charleston. There wasn't enough for her to do.

"There isn't enough for anybody to do," she said to herself.

Henri's deep gruff tones came to her ear, and then Aunt Heloise laughing coming up the stairs, putting her hat and prayerbook away, changing from her Sunday best to a starched housedress, and humming a song.

"Come in," Leonie said in answer to her knock at the connecting door.

"I'm getting formal in my old age," Heloise said. "Can't just burst in now. How are you, child? Had some rest? What's that you're reading?"

"Omar Khayyam. It's very soothing," Leonie said. "How were vespers, Auntie?"

"About the same as usual," Heloise said with a smile. "Same vespers, same people. Well, I'm going down now to fix supper."

"Let me help you, Auntie."

"A new broom sweeps clean," Heloise said. "You sit right there. No Yankee housework the first day you get home."

"I expect to help you keep house," Leonie said, sincerely. Heloise smiled skeptically.

"I'll remember that," she said.

"It's ridiculous for you to spend all that money for Queenie when the two of us could run the house."

Heloise held a finger to her lips and opened her eyes very wide. She had a wonderfully funny face, Leonie thought. "Do you want to bring on another earthquake? How would it look if the Lemays of Edisto Island didn't have a servant? Tchhk, tchhk."

"I don't suppose he'll ever get over those ways of his," Leonie said.

"Not very likely. Your uncle hasn't changed much in forty years. I expect he'll be talking about a butler before long, with all that money he expects to get."

"I wish something like that would happen to him."

Heloise shrugged. "Your uncle has always been a dreamer. He gets a lot of fun out of thinking about it. Just jolly him along, Leonie. You will, won't you?" she continued, a serious look coming over her face. "I mean, not upset him by arguing?"

"People need to be shaken out of their ruts," Leonie said. "But I will try to spare his feelings."

Henri was so glad to have his niece back that he could not leave her alone.

"Now, Leonie," he said as they sat down to supper, "we hope you're going to find lots of things to occupy your time." He had said the same thing at dinner.

"Oh, there's lots to do," Leonie said, but she didn't believe it.

"There are, of course, lots of people to pay calls on," Henri said. "First of all there's Cousin Julie. She's getting very old, and she's had a shock in the death of poor Cousin Tessie."

"I'll go and see her tomorrow," Leonie promised. "And thank Cousin Annette for the earrings."

"Your old teachers—" Henri said.

"I'll go to see them, too."

"And your old Dah. She's too crippled up with rheumatism to come and see you."

"Of course I'll go to see Dah."

"You might take her some sweets from Onslow's. Northerners," Henri pointed out, "are always talking about how badly we treat the darkies, but they don't know how many people take an interest in their old servants. Of course, we keep them in their place."

Leonie nodded politely.

"No doubt you've heard of this Southall business," Henri went on.

"What Southall business, Uncle?"

At Henri's angry account of the Northern lady's bequest, Leonie laughed.

"It's all very well to laugh, Leonie, but it's a calculated insult." Henri glared. "There are people who approve of what she has done," he began, and then, not wanting to mention the Calverts, he stopped.

"I'll be careful not to say that I approve of it, Uncle."

"H'm. And there's Antoinette."

"Now," Heloise said, "we are moving over the line that divides the sheep from the goats."

"Naturally, you'll go to call on the Bishop," Henri continued, for bearing to take up the challenge. "And Madame Lavigne."

He sighed as he thought of the good old days when Madame had ruled the choir.

"Well, now, Leonie," Heloise said, "that gives you a full week's visiting to do. Maybe if you have a few minutes in between you'll go to see the Garrison girls and some of your friends."

With determined good-humor, Henri ignored this taunt too, and it struck Leonie that her aunt wasn't exactly living up to the advice she had given earlier. Any mention of Miss Antoinette was likely to make Heloise a trifle acidulous. Impulsively Leonie got up and went over to Henri and kissed his cheek. "You're an old angel, Uncle," she said. "I wish you weren't a relative of mine. I'd marry you."

"You little rascal," Henri said, and then his brow furrowed. He spoke with an air of great significance. "Your aunt and I," he said ponderously, "have felt very happy that we were able to give you the advantages of four years at college. We hope you aren't going to throw it away on people who aren't worth it."

Later, there being nothing to do on Sunday evening except walk or visit, Leonie, too tired for either, sat in her aunt's room and they talked.

"You mustn't mind your uncle," Heloise said, when Leonie remarked that the old gentleman was becoming very preoccupied with trifles. "He has your good at heart, you know."

"Of course," Leonie said. "But he talks as if there were going to be unlimited opportunities for me to use my education. What can

a girl do in Charleston except marry, or work in an office, or be a schoolteacher?"

Heloise nodded. "There isn't much. I've often thought that if I'd lived in the North I'd have been a composer. I'd have been able to hear more music and—oh, well, what's the use," she said. "The best way is to take what God sends."

"And as for getting married—" Leonie shrugged. "The young men in Charleston. Gosh. And their prospects. Look at Uncle, still courting Miss Antoinette. And there are dozens like him. I don't want to reach sixty and still be engaged."

"Yes, it's too bad," Heloise said.

"I suppose if I hadn't come along just at that time he would have married her, even if he was past forty?"

"Don't bother your pretty head about that, child."

"And you were very pretty, Auntie. In fact, you still are. Did you—"

Heloise made a face. "You want to hear about my great sorrow, I expect," she said. "Of course, there were Mama and Papa to take care of, but that wasn't the real trouble. I thought I was too good for anybody, I'm afraid. I didn't have as much sense as I've got now. Of course a young lady oughtn't to jump at the first chance she has, no matter what happens. And I do hope, Leonie, that you're not going to throw your mind and your education away on somebody who can't appreciate them."

"You're inconsistent, Auntie."

"I don't want you to be too proud," Heloise said, "but I want you to look before you leap."

Alone, Leonie sat thinking about her aunt and uncle. It was to be expected that they would overrate the amount of education she had received, since neither had gone to college. Leonie herself was under no real misapprehension about the amount of learning she had. She had read a bit of Livy and Horace before dropping Latin; she had gone through a play or two of Corneille, Racine, and Molière and Halévy's *L'Abbé Constantin*. She had studied Pancoast and Spaeth's history of English literature without reading more than a few of the works mentioned in it, and she had written a short essay on Keats, on which the instructor had scribbled, "You have the germs of a good style—cultivate them." From Sister Immaculata, the president, she

had learned that the Russian ballet was obscene and lascivious, that the Church was persecuted in France and Mexico, that Shelley and Byron had led thoroughly immoral lives and that the latter especially had done something unspeakable. She had a smattering of history and biology and psychology and she had got through plane trigonometry.

In the arts she was familiar, although the familiarity was already fading, with the more decorous masterpieces, and she had practised the piano enough to play slowly Bach's First Prelude, and some pieces by Mendelssohn, Stephen Heller and Moszkowski. She had learned to make cocoa in a chafing dish, to put up her hair in the latest style, and to play basketball and field hockey after a fashion. Her eyes had been opened, though not very wide, to the possibilities of romance, she had polished up her dancing and slang, and she had formed the conclusion that Westerners were uncouth and "flip."

It was not a great deal of intellectual furnishing after four years. Nevertheless, merely being away had done something to her, and she knew instinctively that adjustment was going to be difficult.

Hearing her uncle come up the stairs, she went out on the piazza and met him outside his door.

"Good-night, Uncle," she said, putting her arms around him and giving him a kiss.

"Good-night, dear," Henri said. "It certainly is wonderful to know that you're home again."

And Leonie noticed that his voice was husky with affection and pleasure. She was glad they hadn't clashed yet.

Chapter Eight

LEONIE BEGAN THE round of visits Henri had so insistently reminded her of by going to pay her respects to Miss Julie and to her Cousin Annette O'Donnell. Cousin Annette was just about to leave for her own round of visits, but Leonie thanked her for the earrings and they chatted for a few minutes, after which Leonie stayed to talk to the old lady.

Miss Julie was in a religious frame of mind that day and she said little except to urge Leonie to enroll in the sodality and to keep up her duties.

"And don't forget to come to see your old cousin once in a while," she said in parting. "Nobody pays any attention to old people nowadays."

Leonie promised that she would and sped blithely away along Ashley Avenue. It was her intention to go and visit her old nurse, but suddenly she decided that she would rather stop in and see the Garrisons, who were members of her crowd and about the only ones in it whom she really liked. At Miss Low's, and at Memminger School she had known a good many girls of the old Charleston families, but the friendships hadn't endured. In fact, they had begun to wither in high school, when Leonie realized, with hurt feelings, that she wasn't being invited to parties. After that she had protected herself by pretending that she didn't care. But she had resented, and still resented, this social cleavage.

She took comfort from her smart Baltimore clothes. She knew that she looked a great deal more stylish than most Charleston girls of her age, and she was trying to put any nascent feeling of inadequacy out of her mind and was in sight of the tall, high-pillared house on Montague Street when a young man raised his hat and said, "Good-morning, Leonie."

"Why, Lincoln Calvert!" Leonie exclaimed, and she must have looked her astonishment, for the young man laughed.

"Can't lose a bad penny," he said. "Here I am, back in Charleston. And so are you, although nobody could call you a bad penny."

Leonie was glad to see him and she looked at him with considerable pleasure. Lincoln Calvert was a young man to catch any girl's eye. He was tall for Charleston, dark-eyed, clear-skinned, and he had straight glossy black hair and the features of a collar advertisement. He was stylishly dressed, too; his long jacket buttoned high, his trousers with a deep cuff, and his necktie gathered in a long, slender knot. His hard straw hat sported a black band, and his shoes were brown buttoned low quarters, brilliantly polished.

"I've just come back from school," Leonie said. "I hadn't any idea you were in Charleston."

"Well, I hope you're pleasantly surprised. I'm going to stay, too. Farming. I haven't seen you for nearly five years, Leonie. You were just a little girl then."

"You weren't so much of a man yourself. And you didn't have that Northern accent, either."

"I can still say 'Bott'ry' as well as anybody else," Lincoln said. "See here, Leonie, we aren't strangers. Think your uncle would let me come to see you?"

Leonie flushed. "I suppose he would," she said in some embarrassment, "but you haven't asked me yet."

"I guess I've been forgetting my pretty manners in the crude North. Miss Hughes, may I have the privilege of calling some evening? Will that do?"

"Now you're overdoing it," Leonie said. "Of course, I'd like to see you."

"Then you sure will. I've bought a farm across the bridge. I've just been to see Mr. Garrison about it."

"Why, I'm going to their house. Not to buy a farm, though. I don't think I'd like farm life."

"Maybe you haven't looked at it quite the right way," Lincoln said. "I mustn't keep you standing here in the heat. Good-bye."

"Good-bye," Leonie said. "Goodness," she thought, "he is handsome. My old sweetheart." She laughed cheerfully at the thought and then dismissed him from her mind.

Eileen Garrison saw her from the yard and ran to let her in. She shouted for the benefit of her sisters that Leonie was there, and Mr. Garrison asked in a roar what was all that noise.

"Why, it's Leonie!" he bellowed. He was a short, square man with mustaches and a bald head and no inhibitions. He put his arms around her and kissed her heartily. "You little devil," he said, "you get to be more of a heartbreaker every day."

"You go on, Mr. Garrison," Leonie said.

The three other Garrison girls trooped in, all large, blonde, and blue-eyed Amazons beside whom Leonie looked like a gypsy, and a little one at that.

"Gosh, it's wonderful to see you again, Leonie," Virginia said. May, who was quiet, smiled shyly at her. Caroline pulled at the sleeve of Leonie's dress and wanted to know where she had bought it, and Eileen, who was the baby, informed her that they were about to buy a new Hudson.

Then they all five charged up to Miss Kate's room.

"Miss Kate!" Leonie said.

"Why, Leonie, child," said Miss Kate. "Come over here and let me have a good look at you."

Leonie asked politely after her health.

"About as well as ever," said Miss Kate, who suffered from chronic dyspepsia. She smiled a tired, invalid's smile. "I know your uncle and aunt are glad to have you back," she said.

"They seem fairly glad," Leonie said, and the girls imitated her way of rolling the "r" in *fairly*.

"I told you she'd turn out to be a Yankee!" Virginia said.

"Anybody'd think she hadn't been in Charleston for years, instead of only eight months," Caroline said.

"There was another returned native here a while ago," Virginia told her. "Know who I mean?"

Leonie felt herself blushing. "I met him myself."

"And isn't he handsome!" Eileen exclaimed. "All he needs is a mustache."

Virginia shuddered. "He's buying some farm land from Papa," she said. "I'll bet if he'd known you were coming, Leonie, he'd have stayed and stayed. He used to be sweet on you."

"Now, Virginia," Miss Kate said, "they were just children together."

"Leonie's Uncle Henri forbid him to come to the house," Virginia declared.

"Virginia, you're exaggerating," Leonie said.

"I am nothing of the kind! You make me sick, Leonie Hughes. Your uncle did tell him to stay out of your house."

"You children go downstairs and finish your argument there," Miss Kate said. "I'm sure Leonie doesn't want to stay in here. Come in to see us often, child, and when I feel better I want to hear all about your graduation. . . . And give my best respects to Miss Heloise and your uncle."

"Let's us sit out on the piazza," Caroline suggested. "I made some fudge. It ought to be cooled off now."

"Did Lincoln Calvert say he was coming to see you?" Virginia inquired.

"Yes, he did, but you can have him, Virginia," Leonie said. "He's not rich enough for me."

"But you're going to be rich," May said. "Aren't you?"

"I wish I thought so. But that's just one of Uncle's dreams."

"It would be nice, though," Virginia said. "Here, Caroline, don't give Leonie all that fudge."

"It's kind of grainy," Caroline apologized. "I guess I cooked it too long."

"You ought to keep your mind off the boys while you're cooking," Eileen said.

"What would you do if you had a lot of money suddenly coming to you?" May asked.

"I don't know," Leonie said. "I might travel a little. Buy a lot of clothes . . . and maybe I'd find something to do."

"You mean work?" Caroline asked.

"Not for money. Just to do something I liked."

"I'd be a painter," Caroline said.

"I'd take piano lessons from one of the big teachers in the North," Virginia decided.

"Certainly there's nothing to do in Charleston," Caroline declared. "Well, I guess I'll have to put up with having that new Hudson. We'll have some grand rides, anyway."

"We're going to drive it up to the mountains," Virginia said. "Next week we go away. Are you going away, Leonie?"

"I don't know," Leonie said, too proud to tell even her intimate friends (who knew it) that her aunt and uncle were too poor to give her a trip. "I think Auntie would like to have me home for a while."

"She wants to stay with Lincoln," Caroline said.

"I've already said that Virginia can have him."

"No, thank you," Virginia said. "None of the flighty Calverts for me. And as far as that's concerned, I'm going to be an old maid. Gosh, I'm twenty-four if you want to know it. And what men are there in Charleston. I'd like to know? Most of them have gone away to get jobs."

"That leaves me two years," May said.

"And me four," said Caroline.

Leonie did not go to visit her old nurse. It was close to dinnertime when she left the Garrisons, and she went home feeling somewhat depressed.

The Garrisons, she thought, had everything they could possibly want. But even for them, with all their father's ready money and generosity with it, there was very little to do in Charleston. The idea kept running through her head like a tune. Even they weren't married and there did not seem to be any immediate prospects. None of them had ever confided any secret inclination to Leonie, and they had all been very close to her. She wondered idly if Lincoln Calvert hadn't already been seized by some girl of his own set.

And yet, she thought, he couldn't have been or he wouldn't have suggested coming to see her. . . . And ought she to consult her aunt about whether or not he would be welcome?

"I think I'll wait until he does come—if he ever does," Leonie resolved. There was, after all, no use in borrowing trouble.

"Did you see Cousin Julie?" Heloise inquired when she entered the house.

"Yes," Leonie said. "I thanked Cousin Annette for the presents, and Cousin Julie talked to me about my soul."

Heloise giggled. "It might easily have been about your bowels," she remarked. "And then what did you do? You can't have been talking to Cousin Julie all morning."

"I went over to the Garrisons'. We had a nice time. Miss Kate wasn't feeling very well."

"If she'd only stop worrying about herself," Heloise said, "she'd be better off. I suppose she'd feel better if they could get those girls married."

"I don't think Virginia will ever get married." Leonie said. "She's

twenty-four now and she's beginning to talk about being on the shelf."

"That's still young," Heloise said.

"Not in Charleston. Not when there aren't any suitable young men anyway."

But when she got up to her room, and heard her aunt playing the piano (and idly wondered if she might not do well to set a half hour or so for practising every day) she began to think again about Lincoln Calvert. She had known him since they were six, and he was a little boy in wash suits at Miss Low's school, fighting all the others who called him "Yankee" and giving her cookies. It was a good while later that Leonie understood about his uncle and father being on the wrong side during the War and how this was held against them. Perhaps she and Lincoln had been attracted because they both felt like outsiders.

Later Lincoln used to come to play and they had enjoyed themselves for hours on the swing on the downstairs piazza. Her Uncle Henri hadn't quite liked his coming there to play. Especially when Lincoln had mimicked his singing. And then Lincoln had gone to public school. Leonie hadn't seen much of him for a while after that.

It was in her third year at Memminger, when she was about sixteen, that Lincoln had suddenly appeared at dancing school and had formed the habit of walking home with her. In Leonie's last year of high school they had been very close companions. That had seemed like a long and blissful year.

The party had put an end to all that. They had been at Alice Grayson's on Rutledge Avenue. It was Washington's Birthday—no, her memory was wrong about that. It had been later, in the spring. They had played games like children. Postoffice. And she had been kissed. Especially by Lincoln.

Leonie never knew who had told her aunt and uncle, but she remembered her uncle's rage. He had almost slapped her, and he had talked severely about maidenly behavior.

Worst of all, he had ordered Lincoln out of the house, and she had given in and made no more engagements with him. She did not dare disobey her Uncle Henri for fear he would get angry and refuse to send her to college. And she and Lincoln had never seen each other after that except casually, on the street. The next fall

Lincoln had gone North and had never returned to Charleston except for very brief trips.

Since that time Leonie had had very little to do with young men. A few had come to see her from time to time and had vanished. In her summers home from college she had gone to a hop or two, and a few times Charlie Flynn and some of the boys from the church had come over. But the shadow of her uncle's disapproval had lain heavy on all these visits.

Leonie wondered if he really wanted to prevent her being married. For an instant she was gripped by a feeling of panic. Suppose nobody ever came to see her?

Chapter Nine

THE QUESTION WAS answered that evening.

Henri was vocalizing and Heloise was sitting on the downstairs piazza when the bell rang.

She opened the door upon a large young man who seemed to be all joints, with pink skin and straw-colored hair.

"Good-evening," she said.

"Good-evenin', ma'am. My name Joseph Newman."

Heloise recollected immediately who he was. "Won't you come in; Mr. Newman?" she suggested.

Joseph followed her in somewhat awkwardly, and she took his hat (which, during the brief conversation, he had been in danger of tearing apart) and hung it on the rack.

"I hear Mr. Lemay practisin'," Joseph observed, "so I know I come to the right house." He smiled broadly as Henri came out of the parlor. "How you do, suh?" he inquired.

"Glad to see you, Joseph," Henri said. He held out his hand, which Joseph shook with a rustic vigor that made him wince. "Like to talk about singing, eh?"

Joseph blinked.

"Yes suh. I would," he said. "I come to see Leonie, though."

"Oh, yes. Of course."

"I'll go and call her," Heloise volunteered.

"Come in and sit down," Henri said.

Joseph sat carefully on the edge of a small chair and spread his great hands on his knees.

"I hear you singing when I come in," he said.

"Oh-ho yes," Henri rumbled. "Just warming up. I try to vocalize a little every evening. As I was saying the other day about breathing—"

He stood up, struck a note on the piano, and sang down the scale from there.

"Those low notes," Joseph said, chuckling in admiration. "I cya'n git no lower than C een de bass clef." He stood up, and after striking a tone, sang up the scale. "That's my A," he observed.

"A little throaty," Henri said. "I think you are just a little tense, Joseph. You just hold in here—" he patted his stomach—"and let it out."

Joseph complied, and emitted a scream like that of a bull in ecstasy.

"It's a powerful voice," Henri said, looking apprehensively at the open windows.

"Leonie," said Heloise, who came in just as the echoes were dying away, "will be right down." She sat on the little sofa. "Your mother was Sally Blair, wasn't she?" she inquired.

Joseph smiled his broad and slightly foolish smile.

"Yes, muh. She tell me to call on you but I jis put it off, I guess. She send you her best respects."

"Tell her I was thinking of her," Heloise said. "Mr. Lemay has told me what a fine voice you have. We must hear you sing. I don't think I ever heard you at the Cathedral."

Joseph grinned and looked at Henri, who frowned.

"That Mis' Campbell," he said, "'e don't like solos. I just sing in the choir for trainin'. I think," he added in the tone of one simply stating a fact, "I got a voice that's too good for just church singing."

"I see," Heloise said, for she was accustomed to the egotism of singers. "Well, here is Leonie."

Joseph Newman sprang to his feet. "Leonie!" he exclaimed, smiling more broadly than ever.

Leonie did not look overjoyed to see him, but she had done her best to look well. Her black hair shone, her fingernails were polished to a pink sheen, she had discreetly powdered her nose, and she wore a frilly shirtwaist above a long gray skirt and high-topped brown shoes. She had put on the pearl earrings Henry O'Donnell had sent her, and they glowed against her creamy coloring. She looked enchanting.

"How are you, Joseph?" she inquired coolly.

Henri was not sure he liked this familiarity. Here they were, using first names. He did not feel that it was proper.

"How you like being back een Charleston?" Joseph asked.

"Oh, I like it fine," Leonie said.

The conversation hung fire dangerously, and then Heloise said, "Maybe Mr. Newman would sing for us."

"I ain't bring any music," Joseph said, with a disappointed look.

"That doesn't make any difference," Henri said. "Miss Lemay can play anything in any key. You just tell her what you'd like to sing."

Joseph leapt to his feet. "How 'bout 'I'll Sing Thee Songs of Araby?'" he suggested. "Or maybe you like something popular?"

"That would be fine," Heloise said, spinning the piano stool and sitting down to play. "What key would you like?"

Joseph indicated that he would like A flat and Heloise began. Joseph struck a pose with one huge foot forward, clasped his hands before him, and raised his eyes so that he was looking at a corner of the ceiling. Leonie stared restlessly out of the window; Henri assumed a critical air, and nodded sharply as the first tones rang out in the little room. Joseph's voice was a strong one and there was nothing timid about his use of it. There was a strongly African tinge to the words but that was to be expected of anyone with his accent.

"That was fine, my boy," Henri said, and Leonie smiled faintly in encouragement. "Now you ought to sing something else."

Joseph grinned delightedly. "Then You'll Remember Me?" he ventured. "Key of D."

Except for cracking slightly on a high note, Joseph did very well with that one, and he showed his pleasure. But he had the grace to suggest that Henri must sing.

"Oh, nobody wants to hear an old man," Henri said, moving over toward the piano.

"Sho we does," Joseph said. Heloise smiled at Leonie, and Leonie said, "I haven't heard you sing for ages, Uncle."

"I'm not sure I'm in good voice," Henri said. "But I'll try. Heloise, would you play 'Within These Sacred Dwellings'? You know, Joseph. From *The Magic Flute*."

He drew himself up, lowered his chin, shook hands with himself across his lower chest, and began. This time it was Joseph's turn to look knowing. But he was absorbed, and as the great voice rolled out of the little man he shook his head in admiration.

The song ended, Henri returned deprecatory phrases to their compliments and Heloise suggested "The Bedouin Love Song." Henri

obligingly assumed the role of the Arab warrior whose love under the stars was so consuming.

Joseph wagged his head solemnly. "You sho know how to sing, Mr. Lemay," he said earnestly.

"You should have heard me fifteen years ago," Henri said, glowing with satisfaction.

"Leonie," Joseph asked, "you play, don't you?"

Leonie laughed. "The way I play—" she said.

Heloise rose. "Thank you for singing for us, Joseph," she said. "And now if you'll excuse us old people . . ."

Outside in the hall Henri whispered a protest. "Do you think we ought to leave them unchaperoned like that?"

"For Heaven's sake, Brother," Heloise said, "what are you talking about? Anyway, you never thought of that when the young men came to see Leonie before."

Henri, grumbling, gave in. But still he did not like it. His evenings with Antoinette had for a long time been spent in the company of her mother, or at least with the old lady sitting within hearing range. As a compromise, he went into the dining room and took out his record catalogues.

"Leonie," Joseph said, "I sure am glad to see you again."

"That's nice of you," Leonie said with a hint of sarcasm.

"Your uncle certainly proud of you," Joseph told her. "I wish I was through college. Then I could begin to do something."

"What will you do?" Leonie inquired.

Joseph, like most young men, could be remarkably fluent about his future.

"I like to be a singer," he said. "Everybody say I got a good voice and there ain't so many tenors. I got to git up to New York some time and hear Caruso. They say he got a wonderful voice. I hear some records of it but you can't tell by what a man sing into a horn."

"My uncle loves records," Leonie said.

Joseph laughed. "I cyan' help laughing when I hear that voice come out o' such a little man," he said. "If I could sing as loud for my size—" He seemed to think that was very funny, too. "Tell you what, Leonie," he said, "it's hard to make up your mind. You know I very much interested in nature study. Sometimes I think I might make that my business. Someday you want to see my stuffed alligators and birds. I got a lot o' rare specimens, too. My ma and pa think I crazy

because I set out all one night on Wappoo Cut to see an old turtle lay eggs. 'E lay a hundred and twenty-eight."

"You ought to know Colonel Beecham," Leonie said, "at the Water Works."

"Colonel Beecham? Oh sure, I know the Colonel. We old friends. You know 'e see a Tennessee nuthatch 'bout a month ago? First one anybody see around here."

Leonie admitted ignorance of this ornithological sensation and Joseph returned to his music.

"That's the way it is," he said. "You can't make up your mind which ability to use. And they's a lot of people don't think anybody from near home kin do anything unusual like be a famous singer."

"I don't know what I'm going to do either," Leonie interrupted. She knew from long experience that when a singer embarks on the subject of his art there is no stopping him. "I did think for a while that I might try journalism but the chances of getting a job aren't very good. Once I thought of being an artist but I don't think I have any real talent."

"Why, Leonie," Joseph said, his eyes widening, "what you want to do something like that for? Gyrls just ought to git married and have a family."

"I don't know why women can't do the same as men."

"Don't seem natural to me," Joseph said. "I guess I'm just an old stick in the mud, but I never hear of gyrls making plans like that. Not if they pretty."

Leonie ignored the compliment.

"I might be a poet," she mused, "but I never seem to think of any poetry to write. And I wish I could write songs like Aunt Heloise."

"You mean 'e compose?" Joseph asked.

"Well, she makes up lots of songs. She can't write them down. She doesn't read music, you know."

"She ought to git somebody to write 'em down," Joseph said, his professional instincts wounded by this waste of production. "Tell you what, when I git to singing in concerts I'll sing her songs. That," he said, "will make her famous."

Joseph took his leave quite properly at ten, after promising to come again real soon, and Leonie went upstairs. She found Heloise putting the finishing touches on some mending.

"Young Caruso is gone, I see," Heloise said.

"Good riddance," Leonie said, mopping her forehead. "It's hot."

"It's usually hot in the summer."

"Maybe it seemed hotter than it was," Leonie said, "with that bore. Gosh, aren't there any interesting people in Charleston?"

"At least, he's different. He has something on his mind."

"Singing," Leonie said. "And nature. He's got a lot of stuffed alligators he wants me to see."

"Well, that's nice. Maybe he'll bring you a nice snake or something. Or some pretty shells."

"Auntie, can't you take anything seriously?"

"My dear child," Heloise said, "if I didn't try to see the funny side of things . . . Well, you run along to bed. You look tired. It's all that last-minute business at college. I'll go down and see if your uncle is still awake. Lately he's taken to dozing over the dining room table. Even his record catalogues don't always keep him awake now."

"I'll go down and tell him good-night."

But Henri was awake. He was poring over a tattered copy of *The Art of the Singer*, from which he would quote at the drop of a hat.

"That young man," he said when Leonie entered, "could do a lot with his voice. But nobody wants to work nowadays. Let me read you what it says here about the famous tenor Garat—"

"Some other day, Brother," Heloise said. "Leonie's all tired out and she just came down to say good-night." She leaned over and kissed his forehead. Leonie kissed his cheek and he patted her hand.

When they had gone, he put away the record catalogues and went in to see that the piano was closed. As he lowered the lid he touched a note and tried his scale, softly. No question of it, it was magnificent. Some duets with that young man. . . .

It might be pleasant to have a singer for a nephew-in-law but he didn't want a nephew-in-law.

Chapter Ten

WILLIAM, THE COMPLACENT porter at the office, was tinkering with a rattrap next morning when Henri walked in.

"Are the rats eating the stock, William?" he asked.

"No suh," William replied. "Ain' nothin' they wants hyuh when they got all that cheese and stuff nex' do'. I takin' dis home. All my work finished and I was just foolin' with 'em."

"You mean you're having trouble with rats at home?"

"Not any mo' than usual, suh. But they's been *bubonic* plague in New Orleans. The city offerin' fifty cents for each rat you ketches. They's a prize besides. For the first person to ketch a hundred."

"Well, good luck to you, William."

"Thank you, suh," William replied.

Henri went up to the little cubbyhole, changed his coat, and set promptly to work. But William had planted an idea in his mind.

Fifty cents per rat . . . and a prize for the first hundred caught. Of course there were not a hundred in his house, but there were some and they ought to be trapped. It would only be good sense to make some money out of catching them.

When Mrs. Emmons had concluded her usual prefatory remarks, and had inquired about Leonie, he asked if there were any rats where she lived.

"I don't know," Mrs. Emmons replied. "They's a lot of noise at night, but that might be mice. I hope I never see any rats. Snakes," she explained, "I can take or leave. Up home I'd pass them in the road and never turn a hair. But rats—" She shuddered.

"The city wants them caught," Henri said. "There's been an outbreak of plague in New Orleans."

"They say you swell up and turn black," Mrs. Emmons commented.

"During the Middle Ages," Henri informed her, "they had what was known as the Black Death. People died by the million and there

was nobody to care for them. They used to take them away in cyarts."

Mrs. Emmons shuddered again. "I'm glad I wasn't living then," she declared.

"There was a lot to be said for the old times," said Henri, a Charlestonian to his last breath, and went on working.

All morning, however, the rats kept cropping up in his mind. At dinner he did not mention the matter, but on his way back to the office he went down King Street and saw that Wernecke's had traps in the window. The more Henri thought about those rats and the bounty the more enticing the adventure seemed, and on his way home that evening he stopped in at the store.

Mr. Wernecke was glad to see his old friend Mr. Lemay, and what could he do for him?

"I want two or three of those rattraps you have in the window," Henri told him. "The copper ones."

"Those are a dollar and a quarter apiece," said Mr. Wernecke.

The price was a shock to Henri. But it was none of Willie Wernecke's business to tell him carefully what the traps cost—and he had already ordered three of them and could not back out now.

"Very well," he said. "You can charge them, if you don't mind."

"I wish more people like you owed me money," said Mr. Wernecke. "You want them sent, I suppose?"

Henri considered. On the one hand was his desire to conform to the Southern gentleman's code which forbade the carrying of parcels; on the other was his eagerness to have the traps ready and set.

"I'll carry them," he said. "I want to get started catching those rats. The Board of Health seems to be anxious about it."

"A lot of people are doing it," said Mr. Wernecke. "That's why we've got a special showing in the window."

As he left the store, Henri regretted his decision. He felt like a fool proceeding up King Street with the three traps in a fantastically deformed package. And it was his evil fortune to meet Miss Julie, homeward bound from a prowl among the cheaper stores uptown.

"Howdy-do, Henri," she boomed at him. "What have you got there, bird cages?"

"Rattraps," Henri said.

"Have you got that many rats?" Miss Julie demanded in her bold baritone.

"The Health Department has offered a bounty for them," Henri explained. "I'm going to try and catch a few."

"What do they want them for?"

"There's been an outbreak of the plague in New Orleans. They want to be sure to prevent it here."

"How do they know the rats here have the plague?" Miss Julie demanded. "That sounds like some of Dr. White's nonsense to me. He'd do better to get the smallpox case out of Church Street."

"Perhaps so," Henri said, "but they are anxious to catch all the rats they can."

"You can always sell them to the Chinese restaurant," Miss Julie said. "Well, good-bye, Henri. Give me love to Heloise and Leonie."

Henri hurried homeward, and after explaining what was in his package, asked if Lafayette was still around.

"He hasn't been here today," Heloise said. "I think he has a small job of some kind."

"It is exactly like Lafayette," Henri said, "not to be here when he's wanted. Now I'll have to set those traps myself."

In a way, he was relieved. He had threshed out in his mind the propriety of dividing the rewards of ratcatching with Lafayette. This was not the kind of thing the son of a planter usually did. On the other hand, as the capitalist of the venture, he felt that he had a right to a return on his money.

He went in to supper, and ignoring the merriment of his sister and niece at the idea of catching rats for the Board of Health, he soon finished.

"Excuse me," he said, rising and laying down his napkin. "I have some business to attend to."

This was an inspection of the premises. Henri examined the fence carefully for holes, but they had all been carefully covered with odd pieces of tin. He prowled about the woodshed, and then the privy, but there appeared to be no traces of rats. It could not be possible that the worthless cat kept them away; in fact, Henri had heard them in the walls recently.

"They must hide in the house," he said to himself.

In the kitchen he found Queenie making final preparations for her departure. "You know anything about rats?" he inquired, ignoring what looked like a bag of sugar under her arm.

"Well, suh," Queenie replied, "I see a few in my day. What you wants to know about 'em, Mr. Henri?"

"Where do you think the ones in this house are?"

"Oh, they hides mos' everywhere," said Queenie. "Onderneat' the piazza and between the floorin's and the plaster and walls."

"I bought some traps this afternoon," Henri said. "I was just wondering if you knew where to set them."

"You gos to have some cheese or fat meat," Queenie said. "If you puts fresh meat een de trap and 'e stay there 'e gointa stink. Don't you fool with no traps, Mistuh Henri. I gits you some salt pork to-morrow mornin' and you gits Lafayette to set them traps and you kin have a whole mee-nagerie o' rats den." She nodded her head confidently. "Then," she said, "Lafayette kin git a little gasoline and set fire to 'em."

Henri winced. "You can't set fire to these," he explained. "Lafayette will have to take the bodies to the Board of Health and collect the bounty on them. They want to get rid of all the rats to prevent the spread of the plague, and they're going to pay fifty cents for each one."

"You means they payin' for rats?" Queenie inquired, incredulity sticking out all over her. She began to laugh. "I see where I gives up cookin'," she chortled. "Ketchin' rats is quicker and easier."

It was useless, Henri knew, to point out to her the fallacy in this reasoning—that there weren't threats of bubonic plague all the time and that therefore ratcatching was an irregular business. There was no use in trying to combat the impracticality of colored folk.

"You get the salt pork," he said drily, "and I'll talk to Lafayette in the morning or whenever he turns up."

"Yas suh," Queenie said. Her manner was sober enough, but as Henri left the kitchen he was disconcerted to hear her laughing. He might have been still more disconcerted if he had known that at that very same time of evening Miss Julie was, with a sharpness of allusion which was among her most potent weapons, referring to him as "the Pied Piper," and suggesting that a flute would help.

"If there are any wild schemes about," said Henry O'Donnell, conveniently forgetting that he had, at one time or another, invested in such projects as a musical typewriter, a tobacco cure, and a hand-powered vacuum-cleaner, "Mr. Lemay will find out about them."

Lafayette was absent until the next evening, when he dropped in. Henri had his doubts of Lafayette's interest, since he had probably now earned a dollar or so, but Lafayette was keenly interested, and after supper Henri went out to discuss the campaign.

"Yes, suh," Lafayette declared, "you certainly come to the right man."

He described in considerable detail his expertness in the trapping of pigeons, the recovery of stray parrots from trees, and the docking of puppies' tails.

"I puts 'em in a crocus sack," he explained, "and den I bites de tails off. They very tender."

"That will do, Lafayette," Henri said sternly. "Now let's have a look at these traps."

Lafayette inspected the apparatus, and there was a brief delay while he went to get a bit of rag which he rolled into the general shape and size of a rat. He professed himself generally pleased with the adjustment of the trapdoors, but he was obviously disappointed in the type of trap his employer had bought.

"Do better with the old kind of traps that breaks dey necks," he observed. "Dis way, you gos to kill the rat yoself. Cose, if you wants to burn 'em—"

Henri explained that the purpose was not to immolate the rats but to preserve the carcasses. "You have to take them when you collect the money," he said. "You understand that half of it is for you?"

"Yassuh," Lafayette agreed. "If we can' burn 'em, we gos two ways to kill 'em. You ain't got no gun, suh?"

"There are a couple of old horse-pistols that belonged to my father," Henri said, "but I don't think they'd be much good."

"No suh. Not less you wants to commit suicide. Cose, you kin leave de rats in de cage ontell dey frets deyselves to deat', but that's too slow. Bes' way is to chloroform 'em. You just gives 'em a couple of drops and good-bye Mr. Rat."

"You said two ways, Lafayette," Henri pointed out. He was afraid this disquisition might take all night. "Now you've already mentioned three. But I think chloroform would be the best. It's quick and merciful."

"Yassuh," Lafayette replied, but he went on doggedly to show that he was aware of all the possibilities in the profession of exter-

minating rodents. "Another way, you takes a barrel full o' water and puts de trap in and drowns 'em. Dey don't thrash around very long. Den dey's Paris plaster. You mixes that wid dey food. Rat eat 'em and git stiff. Trouble is," he added, stopping to fill his pipe with cut plug, "sometimes dey dies right een de walls. 'E do dat at Colonel Enderby house on Eas' Battry once and befo' dey kin go on livin' een 'em dey has to reverebrate de whole place. Tear out de wall and put 'em back. Colonel Enderby is a very jokey sort of gentleman. 'E tell de cook—gal name Mamie—'e say nex' time dey gos to git rid of rats 'e gointa burn de whole house down. Don' cos' so much, 'e say."

There was a pause while Lafayette enjoyed his joke. Henri did not like the interruption of serious affairs by facetious discussions, but he laughed for politeness' sake.

"Rat smart," Lafayette continued, going expertly about the business of baiting the traps with salt pork. "One time I has to git one out de basement flo' een Mr. Cutler house on Legare Street. Cook name Susie and she tell Mr. Cutler I de bes' ratketcher dey is. Sen' for me. We puts traps een fo' holes een de baseboard and nex' mornin' Mr. Rat got him a new hole. 'Can' keep on doin' dat,' Mr. Cutler say. 'Firs' thing you know rat eat de whole baseboard away.' We stops up all de holes 'cept one and puts de trap een dat one. You think we fool dat beas'? No, suh. 'E stay een de wall. 'Cap'n,' I tells Mr. Cutler, 'ain' but one way gointa ketch dis rat. 'E too schemey. We gos to let 'em git out de room and een de closet—'"

"Lafayette," Henri said, "you are making this up as you go along. Now get to work and let's have those traps set."

"Yassuh," Lafayette said. "Anyways, we ketch dat rat with a rabbit trap. 'E holler so loud 'e wake up the whole house and Mr. Cutler have to shoot 'em."

Having thus abridged his reminiscences, he arranged the traps where he thought they would do the most good, not without a brief disquisition on each choice. Then he bade his employer a respectful good-night, hinted that an advance would be appreciated, and trudged off without it.

Henri rejoined Heloise on the piazza. "Well," he told her, "the traps are all set." He rubbed his hands together. "Lafayette was very talkative. It takes a good deal of time for him to get unwound."

Heloise nodded. "Lafayette is not good for much. The poor fellow

has rheumatism something terrible. That's why he always sinells so of Sloan's Liniment. When you don't notice the rotgut liquor on his breath."

"Where's Leonie gone to?"

"She went over to the Garrisons'."

"Oh," Henri said. He had intended to pay an unscheduled call on Antoinette. He did not particularly want to go and the defection troubled him; this might give him an excuse.

"I suppose I'd better go for her," he said. "I don't like Leonie going around at night without an escort."

"Brother," Heloise said, "you're lapsing into the past. Girls all go out alone now."

"I don't like it."

"Leonie is a young girl of the middle class. There's no family carriage to call for her."

"I don't like to hear you refer to us as middle class," Henri said.

"Well, what are we, then?"

"We are gentlefolk," Henri said seriously.

"Call us anything you like," Heloise said pacifically. "All right, when ten o'clock strikes, you can go three blocks over to the Garrisons' house to escort Miss Leonie home. Maybe you'd better come home from the office several times a day to see if she'd like to go out."

"I'm not talking about the daytime. I want Leonie to have the sense of dignity that being escorted gives a young woman."

"Are you going to sing tonight? You'd better do it before Mrs. Flanders gets to bed. It annoys her, you know, and we don't want to make the Lennoxes lose boarders."

"Damn Mrs. Flanders," Henri said, but he closed the windows carefully before he began his scales.

Although he had counted on music and Sir Walter Scott to pass the time, by a quarter to ten Henri was uneasy about Leonie. He could, of course, arrive early at the Garrisons', but on the other hand he didn't want to cut Leonie's evening short. He was pacing up and down the piazza, occasionally wondering how many rats had succumbed to Lafayette's skill and resisting with difficulty the temptation to examine the traps, when he heard voices in the street. Sensitive to vocal qualities, he identified the girl's voice as Leonie's.

The man's, with the characteristically high pitch of Charleston male voices, had an edge of accent that was not quite native.

In order not to seem unduly concerned, Henri retreated to the dining room and went from there to the door when, after some delay, Leonie rang the bell. In the semi-darkness he did not immediately recognize the young man, who said good-evening.

"Good-evening, sir," Henri responded.

"Uncle Henri, you remember Lincoln Calvert," Leonie said.

The blood rushed to Henri's face, but he controlled himself. "Of course," he said politely but stiffly. "How are you, Lincoln?"

"Fine, thank you, sir."

There was an embarrassed silence and then Leonie said, "Thank you for bringing me home."

"It was a pleasure," Lincoln said. "Good-night."

"He was at the Garrisons'," Leonie said defensively as the door closed.

Henri looked accusingly at her. "I suppose you didn't know he was going to be there," he said drily.

"Well, I didn't," Leonie said, and then she added, with a little edge to her voice, "I was agreeably surprised."

Henri's mind did not operate swiftly enough to frame a withering rebuke to this impertinence.

"You know I never approved of that boy," he said.

"You made that fairly plain, Uncle," Leonie said, "when you forbade him to come to our house."

Before Henri could reply, she was gone.

Sputtering, Henri saw to the closing of the house. He locked the front door with symbolic solemnity, as if he were shutting out all Calverts forever, and then went upstairs to thresh this matter out.

Heloise was putting away her sewing. She looked up at his abrupt entry.

"What's the matter, Brother? What's the trouble?"

"Trouble!" Henri echoed in his profoundest bass. "You may well say 'trouble.'" He pointed to Leonie's door. "That blagyard's nephew," he said dramatically, "brought Leonie home."

"Well, you wanted her to have an escort, didn't you?" Heloise retorted.

Henri stared at her in reproach. "Never mind that," he said. "The

point is that he's already after Leonie." He strode masterfully in the direction of Leonie's adjoining room.

"Just a minute, Brother," Heloise said. "Don't go upsetting the child."

"Upsetting her?" Henri roared. "This is for her own good. I—"

"Not so loud," Heloise said. "Here, if you want to talk about this, let's go downstairs."

"I don't care who hears what I say," Henri said stubbornly.

"You don't need to say that. Actions speak louder than words."

"I don't need to keep my feelings a secret in my own house," Henri blustered, but he followed Heloise downstairs and into the parlor. Heloise closed the door.

"Now," she said, "Leonie won't be able to hear what we say, no matter how she strains. And it's no use to tell me that a lady doesn't eavesdrop."

"You act as if we were going to have some kind of conference," Henri said. "There is nothing to say except that that young man is not to come into this house." He shook his finger emphatically. "Never!" he said. "A blagyard that kisses gyirls who have no brothers to protect them, and the nephew of a—"

"I hope you know what you're doing, Brother," Heloise said calmly.

"Of course I know what I'm doing," said Henri, who had few doubts on the subject.

"Naturally you can forbid Leonie to have the young man here."

"I have already. Years ago."

"But of course," Heloise pointed out, "it won't be very nice for Leonie to be forever meeting him somewhere else. It will only make people talk. You know what Charleston is."

"I don't care whether people talk or not."

"Brother, don't talk like a rag baby. You care a lot what people say."

"This," Henri told her, "is a matter of principle."

"Oh, principle." Heloise tossed the idea away. "Now the question is simply this: Do we let this perfectly respectable young man come—"

"Perfectly respectable?" Henri bleated, losing his usual firm control of his *voce di petto*. "Perfectly respectable? His uncle was a Unionist—"

Heloise ignored this. "Do we allow him to come here quietly," she went on, "or do we encourage Leonie to be rebellious by getting her dander up? You know what she is."

"Heloise—" Henri said. He looked suddenly more unhappy than wrathful. "We've done everything in the world for that child in the hope of making her life happy," he said plaintively, "and now this young ruffian comes to plague her."

"Not *her*," Heloise corrected. "*You*."

Henri took up the photograph of Leonie in her first communion dress, which stood on the crowded table, and stared at it.

"Do for Heaven's sake put that down," Heloise said in irritation. "You're as bad as Cousin Tessie and that picture of Theodora."

"I was just looking at it," Henri explained, but he put the photograph down hurriedly. "I'm responsible for Leonie," he informed Heloise.

"You don't say! Well, so am I. But Leonie is almost twenty-two years old. We can't go on treating her like a child. Not if we want any peace in this house."

"You forget I'm her godfather," Henri said. "I was her godfather by proxy, before we became her gyardians—"

"I know that," Heloise interrupted. "I'm her godmother, too. I was here when it happened. Don't tell me something like that as if I'd been away for sixty years! You still haven't come to the point."

"That is the point. We are responsible for this child's welfare and spiritual well-being, and this young man is disreputable and an Episcopalian."

Heloise sagged a little. There was no denying the latter point. She tried to make light of it.

"I wouldn't think Colonel Calvert's nephew was afflicted with piety," she said.

"A freethinker? That's even worse," Henri said, "if anything could be worse."

"It seems to me that you're taking this matter too seriously. Young men who come to see gyirls don't necessarily intend to marry them."

"You mean," Henri demanded, his mustaches bristling, "that this fellow would *trifle* with our Leonie?"

"I didn't say anything of the kind. But I don't see why you're always jumping to conclusions. And people in glass houses shouldn't

throw stones. Didn't you expect to marry Antoinette Fielding, or were you trifling with her? She's an Episcopalian."

Henri was outraged. "That is a personal matter," he said, "and I resent such talk."

"It's hard not to be personal about this. It's a very personal matter, too," Heloise said. "I don't believe in mixed marriages. But I don't want that child to be an old maid like me. It happens all too easily in Charleston. A gyrl doesn't get too many opportunities, especially when she's been led to think that she's above everybody. I don't want to say this to Leonie, because I'm not anxious to encourage this young man, but if I had the chance to marry Oscar Leonard again I'd do it, Protestant or no Protestant."

Although properly respectful of Heloise's regrets, Henri was not convinced. "But—" he said.

"Besides," Heloise went on, "if we forbid Leonie to have this young man here, as I've already said, she'll think of nothing else night and day. If we make light of it, it does a gyrl no harm to have several young men interested in her. Each one is a sort of nest-egg for the others. And don't forget what I've said about Leonie being grown up. Mama wanted to know everything I did when I was a woman of forty. I don't want Leonie to be treated like that." She waited for an instant, before driving in the clincher. "I'm thinking of the child's own good," she concluded.

Henri looked startled, as if this were a completely new idea. "Of course," he said.

"You know I usually give in to your judgment. But in this case I wish you'd try my way of doing things."

"Do you mean to suggest that I'm bossy?" Henri demanded.

"Whatever put that into your head?" Heloise asked. "I didn't mean to suggest anything of the kind. Well, do you mean to take my advice about this?"

"Partly," Henri said, "but—"

"We can discuss it more fully later," Heloise said. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof, as Cousin Julie probably would say. Now I have to get my beauty sleep."

Henri remained behind to put out the gas. He had a disquieted feeling. As if he had been outgeneraled. But he wasn't going to give up.

Chapter Eleven

DESPITE HIS UNEASINESS about Leonie, Henri's first thought next morning was about his traps, and no Maine lobster fisherman ever hauled up his pots with more eagerness. He had an indistinct memory of a dream in which the sullen rodents were packed like sardines in the three snares, and although of course he did not hope for any such results he was sanguine.

He found three empty traps. Even the salt pork was undisturbed except by a few vagrant flies.

"God damn it!" Henri rumbled.

Profanity was so unusual for him that Queenie, who was sleepily getting the hominy started, could not resist a laugh. Mister Henri was a case.

"Ain' ketch none, suh?"

"Not a one. I tell you, Queenie," Henri said, "there's a curse on everything I do. Sometimes I think somebody has cunjered me."

"Do, Lawd," Queenie said. "Don't talk that way, Mister Henri. You makes me feel bad."

"Well, that's the way it is," Henri said. "I can't even catch rats."

Disconsolate, he sat on the piazza and turned idly through the paper. There was no news of interest to him on the front page and nothing anywhere about the war on rats. He was about to fold the paper and take it in to Heloise's place at the table when a small item caught his eye.

Young Lincoln Calvert, it appeared, had bought a tract of land from Mr. Garrison and was going to "emulate the excellent example of several of our leading citizens who have found truck farming profitable."

Aside from the affront to Henri's conservative taste given by a personal item of this sort the news served as an unpleasant reminder of the young man's presence at the front door on the preceding evening.

"That settles it," Henri said to himself. "That boy will probably be around here for a long time. I wonder where he got the money? The Calverts never had two red cents to clink together. I suppose that fellow has borrowed right up to the hilt."

He was only moderately comforted by the hope that the venture would be unsuccessful or that close attention to farming would keep Lincoln Calvert at a distance. Coming upon the heels of his failure to exterminate the rats, this was a bad start for the day.

Heloise's footstep sounded on the stairs, and he went in to give her the paper. He told her the worst before she could inquire. It seemed less humiliating.

"Not a single rat," he said dolefully.

"No?" Heloise replied. "Well, try again. We mustn't forget that these are Charleston rats. You've got to give them a little time before they try anything new."

"All right, make a joke of everything," Henri said, "but it's very discouraging."

"Never mind. As long as we're not bitten in our beds we ought to be thankful."

"Isn't Leonie coming to breakfast?"

"Oh, let the child sleep. She hasn't got a thing to do and the day is long. Besides, I've heard her say she got used to very light breakfasts up North in Baltimore and she don't like hominy any more."

"She doesn't like hominy?" Henri was aghast.

"No. She says it's all starch and there's no real nutrition in it."

"Nonsense," Henri said. "Our old parrot lived for years on hominy dipped in coffee."

"Leonie is not a parrot," Heloise said, "and she doesn't like sunflower seeds, either." She smiled. "You stop worrying about that child, Brother. She can take care of herself. Now tell me what's in the paper."

Henri pointed out the item about Lincoln Calvert.

"Hm," Heloise said.

"I wonder where he got the money."

"No doubt he'll tell us."

"It can't possibly concern us," Henri said seriously, "but it would be interesting to know."

"Everybody will know before long," Heloise said. "Do you sup-

pose a young man can buy a farm around Charleston without every Tom, Dick and Harry knowing all about it?"

Toward the middle of the morning Henri brought up the matter in conversation with Mrs. Emmons. He hinted that it would be interesting to know the source of young Calvert's money. But apparently Colonel Calvert had not enlightened Mrs. Emmons.

"Oh, that handsome young man," she exclaimed. "I do hope he's goin' to have good luck."

Henri grunted.

"I meant to ask you," Mrs. Emmons said, "how you came out with your ratcatching."

"Didn't catch a single one," Henri admitted.

"If at first you don't succeed, try, try again," Mrs. Emmons said with an air of great originality.

Henri meant to keep on trying. He went home to dinner with a renewed hope. But Lafayette, who had apparently completed the odd job which had kept him occupied of late, met him at the gate with bad news.

"Look like them traps ain't seasoned enough," he remarked, "or maybe the meat ain't high enough yet. But we keep on tryin', suh," he added with the facile optimism of a man for whom time was decidedly not of the essence.

"Maybe you've driven them away," Heloise suggested. "Maybe they've taken the hint that they're not wanted."

"More than I can say for some people," Henri replied pointedly.

"I never could understand why those rats hung around here," Heloise said. "The pickings aren't any too rich."

"I wish you wouldn't criticize what I'm able to provide, Sister," Henri said crossly.

As if his soul had not been tried enough, he noticed that Leonie made a face when she tasted her lamb chop. Heloise would have ignored this but Henri leapt to Leonie's support. He knew how the child hated mutton.

"This isn't lamb," he said.

"I do the best I can," Heloise defended herself. "I didn't buy the most expensive chops but Mr. Gruber swore up and down that these were good."

"I'm afraid they're too rich for Leonie," Henri said in a tone of reproof.

"Leonie will just have to take pot luck now and then," Heloise said.

Leonie was embarrassed. She thrust a piece of the chop into her mouth and chewed it bravely.

"It tastes all right," she said. "I guess the heat has made me a little picky. Don't you and Uncle worry about me. What's good enough for you is good enough for me any time. I know things are high," she rattled on. "I heard Miss Kate say they were paying thirty-five cents a pound for steak."

"Leonie," Henri said, almost sharply, "the price of food is never discussed at our table."

Leonie was accustomed to her uncle's lofty principles, and for one so young, decently aware of his sensitiveness. "I'm sorry, Uncle," she said. "After all, that Lemay fortune will be coming along soon and we'll be so rich then that we'll never have to think about such things."

Heloise laughed mockingly. "I hope it's not too soon," she said. "I'm getting old for shocks of that kind."

"It would be wonderful, wouldn't it?" Leonie asked. "Just think of having all that money to do what you darned pleased with."

"Money," Henri pronounced, "is not an unmixed blessing. You have to learn to manage it."

"I'll take a ten dollar bill for my share right now," Heloise said, "and think I was well off."

"What would you buy, Uncle?"

"There aren't many things that I want," Henri replied. It occurred to him briefly that his first act probably would be to pay up his debts. "I think," he added slowly, "that the first thing I'd do would be to get a good phonograph and some records I have in mind—and a new piano for your aunt."

"I'd buy a new sewing machine," Heloise said.

"I can see I'll have to teach you both to spend money," Leonie said.

"Easy come, easy go," Heloise said. She passed Henri the plate of lettuce. "Would you care to try some of our *pâté de foie gras*, Mr. Rockefeller? It's only been off the ice ten minutes but if you prefer we could throw it out and get some that's fresher."

Henri laughed weakly.

"I wonder if our rats will have to have *pâté de foie gras*, too?" Heloise speculated.

"We could have some solid gold traps made for them."

"Your uncle would consider that putting on airs."

"That's the kind of thanks a man gets when he's doing his best," Henri said, unable to resist amusement at their light-heartedness but just a little annoyed about having fun made of his ratcatching.

Still hopeful, Henri came home at suppertime and found Lafayette in a bullish mood.

"We ketch the firs' one," he announced.

Henri rushed to see the evidence.

"A big one," he said, impressed at the size of the animal racing madly up and down in the wire cage into which his greediness and poor judgment had led him.

"Smell gointa help, too," Lafayette said. "Now that we ketch Mistuh Rat, the rest ain' gointa be so stiff about gittin' een. Now I gwineter drown 'em."

"I thought you said chloroform," Henri protested.

"I ain' got no chloroform. And if this the only one we does ketch, ain' no use buyin' chloroform to kill 'em. I jis drop 'em een a pail o' water."

"Well, all right," Henri said, "but I don't like the idea of drowning even a rat in cold blood."

Lafayette, less humane and certainly more practical, prepared for the execution. He procured a pail of water from the kitchen and asked Henri to hold the trap while he released the rat into his watery grave.

"Then," he explained, "I claps the cover on so's 'e can' jump out. Then I dry 'em off and tomorrow I takes 'em to the Boa'd o' Healt'."

Henri did not hold the trap firmly enough. To get a better grip, he clutched the cage underneath. With a shrill cry of agony he dropped the trap and tore into the house, leaving the gaping Lafayette to cope with the situation.

"Heavens alive, what's the matter?" Heloise shouted.

Henri sank down on the piazza steps. "I've been bitten by a rat," he roared. "Call Dr. Forbes! That rat may have the plague." He held the nipped finger out from his side.

Heloise shouted for Queenie, who came running. "Go quick and

get Dr. Forbes. Tell him Mr. Lemay has been bitten by a rat."

If the attacking animal had been a rattlesnake, Queenie could hardly have lighted out with more speed. She left the pale and frightened master of the house to Lafayette and Heloise, who hoisted him into a rocker.

"This shows," Henri said, "that nobody ought to be without a telephone. Lafayette, look what you've done."

"Ain' my fault, Boss," Lafayette said. "You let de trap go and put your finger too near de rat."

"Well, get rid of him before he bites anyone else," Henri said. "Now all of you keep away. If I've got the plague let's not all die of it."

"Nonsense," Heloise said, but Leonie kept her distance.

"Now don't worry, Brother. It was only a nip."

Henri moaned. "And think of the disgrace," he said, "having people know that you died of the bite of a rat."

"Rats are very important," Heloise said. "Think of the fires they start when the insurance is paid up."

Scorning protocol in such an emergency, Queenie burst through the front door.

"Doctor out," she reported, "but they git him on the phone and e be right over."

"I hope you made them realize that this was a matter of life and death, Queenie," Henri said piteously. "Heloise, you'd better put something on this wound. Iodine or something. I think," he said, and his voice became sepulchral, "it's beginning to throb."

He put his finger to his mouth.

"What on earth are you doing?" Heloise demanded.

"Sucking out the poison."

"I think Uncle is getting this mixed up with snakebite," Leonie suggested, getting over her timidity and coming a little nearer.

Heloise fled upstairs to get that sovereign remedy, iodine.

"Leonie," said Henri gravely, "take good care of your aunt. She's been good to you."

Heloise came flying out with the iodine. By the time she had painted Henri's finger and Henri had commended his soul to Heaven, they heard Dr. Forbes' buggy.

Dr. Forbes was a mild and calm practitioner with a soft voice and an expression made stolid by much practice among the aged.

"Rat bite, eh?" he said. "Well, let's look at it and see if we have to have that rat analyzed. H'm. It's not really punctured. But how did it happen?"

"It was just more of Henri's nonsense," Heloise said. Her brother gazed at her with sorrowful reproach.

"I was trying to catch some rats," he said severely, "because the Board of Health has requested it. In the exercise of my civic duty, I was attacked by one of them. I don't see anything funny about it."

Dr. Forbes almost smiled.

"How did the rat get at you?" he inquired.

"I was holding the trap," Henri explained, "while Lafayette was getting ready to drown the rat and it nipped me."

"Good thing it didn't take the end of your finger off," said Dr. Forbes, callously. "Well, I think you're going to be all right, Mr. Lemay."

"You talk very lightly about it," Henri said, "but it's a shock for a man of my years."

Dr. Forbes patted his shoulder. "You leave ratcatching to Lafayette," he said cheerfully. "Any rat that bites him will regret it. And how are you, Miss Heloise?"

"You can't kill me," Heloise said.

"And Leonie?"

"I'm fine, Doctor."

"Didn't get a chance to congratulate you," Dr. Forbes said. "How does it feel to have that degree?"

Leonie smiled. "No different," she said.

"Well, you hurry up and get yourself married. Some young fellow with plenty of money, and take your aunt and uncle to the mountains every summer, eh?"

"Maybe I will," Leonie said. "Good-bye, Doctor."

"He didn't take this very seriously," Henri said, a trifle disgruntled.

"I think you're lucky, Brother, that the rat didn't find you tender."

Henri smiled ruefully. "That's another two dollars gone into this business of catching rats," he said. "Throwing good money after bad. Where is Lafayette off to?"

But he knew well, from the subdued sounds of amusement in the rear of the house where Lafayette was. In spite of the shock he had

undergone, Henri rose and went to the kitchen, where he found Lafayette drinking a cup of tea.

"I drown 'em, Mr. Henri," Lafayette said. "'E kick a lot."

"Never mind telling me about it," Henri said. "Now tomorrow morning you take that rat to the Board of Health and get your fifty cents. And after this, you take care of those rats yourself and you can have all the money."

Dr. Forbes, by an odd coincidence, paid his next visit to the O'Donnell house, where one of the boys had been eating green figs and had developed a stomach ache and a rash on his lip.

While there, he casually mentioned Henri Lemay's rat bite, and Miss Julie, mindful of duty, decided that she would pay her cousin a visit and see for herself the seriousness of the injury. Immediately after supper, she put on her hat and veil and best gloves and set out.

Henri answered the bell when she gave it a twist. Miss Julie, who always acted as if she regarded her visits as a huge joke, laughed heartily. "Here I am," she said.

"Good-evening, Cousin Julie," Henri said, somewhat surprised.

"I'm glad you're able to answer the bell, Henri. I expected to see you lying in your gore."

"What—" Henri stammered.

"I heard about your rat bite. Cyril told me. He came to see little George. George had a stomach ache from eating green figs."

Having lowered her bulk into a rocker, Miss Julie was soon embarked on reminiscences having to do with rats and various other vermin when the bell rang again. Leonie answered it, and admitted Lincoln Calvert.

"Cousin Julie," Leonie said, "this is Lincoln Calvert. Aunt Heloise, I'm sure you remember Lincoln."

Heloise smiled, and Henri shook hands without enthusiasm. But Miss Julie beamed. She liked young men.

"Well, well," she said, ready to take from the occasion any slight formality it might otherwise have had, "you Eddie Calvert's nephew?" She chuckled, and as Lincoln took the chair Henri offered she turned to him. "Did you know your Uncle Eddie was one of my sister's beaux?"

"No, I didn't, ma'am," Lincoln said, apparently unembarrassed by Miss Julie's bonhomie. Meanwhile Henri tried to head her off.

"Lincoln has been away to school," he informed her, "and this is his first visit to us."

This suggestion that she soft-pedal the little intimacies of revelation might have impressed anyone else, but Miss Julie had small time for being what she called stiff. She nodded and went on. "It was quite a story," she said. "Eddie Calvert was the handsomest young man in Charleston, and everybody thought he was interested in poor Tessie. I don't think," she added, "that my father and he had discussed the matter, and of course they were always properly chaperoned. Anyway, after that business about the War she wouldn't have anything more to do with him. So she told me. And she married poor Willie Fisher. It was a very bad swap, I think. If your uncle had applied himself, he might have been something."

Leonie was making frantic signals to her aunt, but Heloise seemed to be enjoying Miss Julie's observations.

"You're not going to the country with the family?" Henri interrupted.

"Not me," Miss Julie said quickly. "Once is enough. They don't put enough pepper in their food and I have to dress up all the time. Besides, there's no church," she continued, airing her usual grievance about the lack of religious facilities in North Carolina. "No, I'll stay in the city and keep me eye on Henry. That's me son-in-law," she explained to Lincoln. "And speaking of the country, Leonie, your Cousin Henry asked me to remind you that you promised to come up for a couple of weeks."

"Tell him I said I was much obliged," Leonie said.

"It will be good for Betsy," Miss Julie said. "That child is growing up like a weed. You'd be a good playmate for her."

Miss Julie had a tendency, by no means rare in those of advanced years, to confuse young adults and children in her thoughts.

"But what I came over to see about," she observed, "was Henri's rat bite." She beamed at the young people, quite oblivious of the fact that Henri was looking at her with murder in his eye. "I must be getting along. You children will want to have some time to talk. Tell your Uncle Eddie that I send him my best."

"I'll go with you," Henri offered with reluctant gallantry.

"No, no," said Miss Julie, "no need to escort an old lady like me. Henri, you put on gloves if you're going to tussle with rats."

"Let me go with you," Lincoln said politely.

"Indeed not," said Miss Julie. "You stay and talk to little Leonie. I know what young people are like." She grinned knowingly, and went to the front door accompanied by her older cousins.

"Damn her," Henri exploded as the door closed. "She certainly can put her foot in it. Making a fool of me about those rats and then—" he lowered his voice—"making that fellow welcome in my house."

Re-entering the parlor, Henri and Heloise asked politely about Lincoln Calvert's plans and tactfully withdrew to continue the conversation abovestairs.

"Did Leonie know that boy was coming here tonight?" Henri demanded hotly.

"If she did, she didn't say anything to me. How is that rat bite?"

"Never mind the rat bite. Leonie has taken advantage of us. She should have asked permission at least."

"He is a pretty fellow," Heloise said.

Henri snorted. "I suppose foolish gyirls all over the city have set their caps for him," he said, hopefully.

"Maybe so. He looks handsome enough to pick and choose."

"I wish Cousin Julie hadn't been so hail-fellow-well-met with him."

"Oh, you know Cousin Julie."

"The idea of her keeping up a friendship with that blagyard Calvert," Henri said. "It's a disgrace for the widow of a Confederate veteran. No doubt this boy is as much of a peculiarity as his uncle. I only hope Leonie gets disgusted with him soon. What do you think, Sister?"

"I don't see anything peculiar about him."

"How can you tell?" Henri demanded.

"Why did you ask me, then?"

Henri left the field with whatever dignity he could assume. "Women," he growled, "can never be consistent."

"Well, I got in safe," Lincoln said. "I was afraid your uncle might still be mad at me."

Leonie laughed shortly. "Don't worry about that," she said. "He was mortified, though, when Cousin Julie told about his rat bite."

"Gosh, everybody has rats," Lincoln said. "What happened?"

"Uncle was helping to take a rat out of a trap and it nipped him."

Lincoln couldn't help laughing. "I hope it didn't draw blood," he said.

"No, but he thought it did. He made an awful fuss. He sent Queenie for the doctor, and the doctor told Cousin Julie when he was at the O'Donnells' house. Naturally Cousin Julie had to see for herself. Uncle could have killed her for telling about it before you."

"She's a wonderful old lady," Lincoln said.

Leonie, while it was impossible for her to apologize for an eccentric relative, was grateful to him for making it unnecessary. "Cousin Julie is pretty old," she said. "She likes your uncle."

"Very few people do," Lincoln said. "On top of everything else, he has to go around now telling everybody he thinks that Southall bequest was a good thing. I admire the old man for speaking his mind, but—"

"But you don't entirely agree with him."

"Not in everything," Lincoln said. "Sometimes I wish I didn't have to be the nephew of the town rebel. I'd just like to feel that I was like everybody else. Gosh, I used to feel it even in private school."

"I remember how you used to fight about it."

"I wish—" Lincoln began. "Oh, well, what's the use of growling about it? I came back to Charleston of my own accord. In the North I was a Southerner and an outsider. Here—well, it's not that I care what they say, it's just their attitude. But what can you expect of a place where everybody has hominy every day for breakfast and rice every day for dinner?"

"I get good and tired of them all myself now and then."

"The Calverts," Lincoln said, "were always on the wrong side of the fence. Even in the Revolution some of them were Loyalists. Some people even remember that."

"I wouldn't worry about it if I were you," Leonie said.

"It's not that I care," Lincoln said. "It's just that they make me sick."

"You know, you're very much like the way you were when we were children together."

"You haven't changed much either, Leonie. Except that you're even prettier."

Leonie accepted the compliment gracefully.

"What's it going to be like here for you?" Lincoln asked. "You've been away to college and you know a few things. And there's not much to do in Charleston."

"I've been thinking a lot about it. There just isn't anything for people as poor as we are." Leonie rose. "How about sitting out on the piazza? I don't know why we stayed in this stuffy parlor."

They pulled the chairs up close to the banisters, and Lincoln put his feet up.

"Almost the way I'll sit over on my farm, if I ever get the house built," he said.

"Except that you won't have a peeling brick wall right in front of you."

"Well, no. After I get that land properly conditioned," Lincoln said, suddenly enthusiastic, "I'm going to put in some crops, and then we'll see how the first season turns out. I'll have to have a shack to live in at first. There's an old cabin out on the place but it's not much good. Say, Leonie, I'd like to take you over to see things before I get started. I'm getting a second-hand Ford. It'll shake you up a bit but it's not far."

"I'd love it," Leonie said.

"It's nice sitting here. With you, I mean. I hope it'll get to be a habit." Lincoln looked thoughtful. "Remember when we used to go crabbing over by the foot of Beaufain Street?"

"It seems a long time ago."

"Remember the time I kissed you at that party and your uncle was so mad?"

"Of course I remember it."

"Well," Lincoln said, "one of these days I'm going to do it again."

After he had gone, Leonie went into her aunt's bedroom.

"He seems to be a nice enough boy," Heloise said. "Did you have a nice evening?"

"Yes. Lincoln's very serious. He wants to talk about farming and he's got a lot of ideas. I'm afraid he is something like his uncle. But he's nice."

"Leonie," Heloise said, "I wouldn't get too fond of that young man if I were you."

"Who said I was going to get too fond of him? He's just an old friend."

But Leonie blushed as she said that, and Heloise saw the color in her cheeks.

"Good-night, Auntie."

"Good-night, child."

Heloise shook her head. "I might have known it," she said to herself.

Chapter Twelve

HENRI HAD NOT seen Antoinette for two weeks. His intentions had been good but Saturday had seemed so near that he had easily put off the visit. It bothered him a little to think that his lack of eagerness was a sign of advancing age. But Antoinette said nothing more significant than that she had missed him.

"At least my traveling days are over now," Henri said, with a hasty glance into the long faded mirror to see the effect of the finery he had bought for Leonie's graduation. "I expect we'll see each other every Saturday night from now on."

Antoinette seemed to accept this as understood. "Now do tell me about that dear little gyrl," she said.

"She's come home looking more beautiful than ever," Henri said, "and I hope she's going to settle herself to our life again."

"The young are always restless," Antoinette said. She rang for Lucy to bring the sherry. "But you had a pleasant trip?"

"Oh, very."

"And what about—" Antoinette hesitated—"the rats?"

Henri started. This made it plain that everybody in Charleston had heard about his fiasco, and was laughing at him. He reflected with bitterness that three of the city's least guarded tongues had known of the affair—Cousin Julie, Queenie, and Lafayette. A second source of gall was the fact that no sooner had he renounced all his financial interest in the venture than Lafayette had effected an impressive haul of rats.

"Oh, it was nothing to make a fuss about," he said. "I got some traps and turned them over to Lafayette. He's done quite well with them, I believe. It'll be a little pocket money for him."

"But I heard you had been bitten," Antoinette said.

"Oh, ho, ho," Henri said, forcing a laugh. "Lafayette called me to see the first one he caught and it nipped my finger. Heloise was upset, of course, and she insisted on calling Dr. Forbes."

"Oh," Antoinette said innocently, and Henri knew that she had heard an embroidered recital of his adventure. He hastened to change the subject.

"And what about your plans, my dear?"

This was enough to send Antoinette off into a lengthy enumeration of her troubles. Chief of these was that the street was about to be paved and she was facing a fairly heavy assessment just when she was trying to rake and scrape together enough money to have the roof repaired.

"I really don't know what to do," she said fretfully. "If I'm going to have guests I can't have the roof leaking, and if I have to pay an assessment it will be a strain to pay for the roof too. I asked Mr. Tom Wheeler what he thought I could do and he suggested a small mortgage. What would you think of that?"

"Antoinette," Henri said in his most impressive manner, "I don't believe anybody should ever borrow money unless it is absolutely impossible to obtain it any other way."

"Mr. Wheeler thought it would be fairly easy to borrow two thousand dollars on the house."

"If there's no other way out," Henri said, "of course you'll be able to pay off the principal and interest every year. I suppose it will have to be a ten year mortgage."

"You're the only person I can depend on," Antoinette said. "I don't trust other people's judgment."

Henri fairly glowed.

"I have had a great deal of experience in financing my own affairs," he said.

"It's really a shame you haven't had some big estate to manage," Antoinette said. "You would have been brilliant as a man of affairs."

"No, no," Henri said. "Honesty is the only thing I have to offer. That isn't worth much nowadays."

"I suppose not," Antoinette said sadly. "The old days are gone. Why, speaking about honesty, do you know I've heard that somebody is profiting from all this paving of the streets."

"Don't you believe that. The present administration is one of the best Charleston ever had."

"Well, I don't like that Mayor Glynn. He seems so uncouth to me."

"Don't let's argue politics," Henri said. "Personally, I admire Mr. Glynn."

"That's one thing you and Eddie Calvert would agree on," said Antoinette.

"H'm," Henri replied. He felt that if Colonel Calvert supported the mayor it was not from political wisdom but just from plain pig-headedness. "I see that nephew of his has bought his farm."

"Yes, dear little Lincoln is a grown-up farmer now. I remember once when he was little and came here and he was sitting in that very chair over there and I was telling him about Grandfather Fielding and he looked at the portrait and said, 'Miss Antoinette, did he wear a cravat under those whiskers?'"

Henri remembered distinctly that Antoinette had told him this very story only two weeks earlier, but he laughed graciously.

"Yes," Antoinette said, after she had wiped her eyes, "and now the little chap is about to start in on his own farm. Edmund wanted him to be a lawyer, but Lincoln was always headstrong. He wouldn't go to Clemson and so they found the money to send him to Cornell. I think he did some work there to help pay his way through—waiting on table, I think it was."

"You mean," Henri said, in a voice vibrant with shock, "that he worked as a servant?"

"Of course he was only a boy," Antoinette explained lamely. "It was a very strange thing to do, though. I suppose the new generation sees things differently. He's bought a tract of land from that Mr. Garrison. Edmund told me a friend he made at college had furnished the money."

"Northern capital," Henri said disapprovingly. "You mark my words, Antoinette, first thing you know the Yankees will own Charleston."

"Some of the old places up the Ashley have been sold already," Antoinette said. "I do hope they won't stir up the colored people and make them discontented."

"The people who want to bring all that money here from outside call it progress," Henri said. "They want lots of people here to crowd the streets and make everything lively."

They sighed over the end of the old times. Henri spoke of the Navy Yard and the new boulevard; Antoinette of the electric light poles that disfigured the streets. "I can understand," she said, "just

why Mrs. Ravenel ended her book with the War. Thank Heaven my poor father and mother were spared seeing this house given over to the revels of tourists. Not that I'd allow any such thing. It's just a figure of speech," she explained hastily. "Lucy and I are taking a complete stock of everything, before we have any strangers here."

"Very wise," Henri said. "You ought to put away the things you don't want profaned."

"Everything will be profaned," Antoinette said mournfully. "Mr. Rhett himself once sat in that chair under the mirror, and General Beauregard on the sofa there. I was only a little girl. He took me on his lap and said I reminded him of a night-blooming cereus. I'll keep Mother's bedroom closed, naturally."

"Certainly."

"Papa died in the hospital, you remember. So I don't have to worry about the master bedroom. Of course he lived in it, and my ancestors were born and died in it, but the association is not quite so personal."

Henri nodded. "I must be going, my dear," he said, kissing her forehead.

"You take good care of yourself," Antoinette counseled. "And tell that dear child not to forget to pay me a visit."

The more he thought of what Antoinette had told him, the more Henri disapproved of Lincoln Calvert.

"That boy," he told Heloise, "has borrowed money from some Northerner to buy that farm."

"Well, I expect he had to get the money somewhere," Heloise said. "I don't see why you worry about it, Brother."

"I think the character of any young man who associates with our Leonie is important."

"Character?"

"Yes, character. He's started off on the wrong foot early in life, piling up debts. Borrowing from Northerners, too. That's one of the first steps toward having them own us completely. It's dangerous."

"You'd better get out that old horse-pistol of Papa's," Heloise said with a laugh.

Henri glared. "Another thing," he said, "that fellow worked as a servant up there at college."

"I suppose he felt nobody knew him and that it didn't matter.

Well, Brother, when he makes a formal request for Leonie's hand you can discuss these things with him."

Restraining the impulse to sputter, Henri said crossly that it was no use to try to talk seriously to her. "Good-night," he said, and marched out.

"He's got Lincoln Calvert on the brain," Heloise said to herself. She sighed. "Oh, well, maybe it will keep him happy. It will put Mrs. Campbell and that Lemay fortune out of his mind for a while, and that might be a good thing. I hope he won't argue with Leonie about this."

Henri had decided, after some stewing, to say nothing to his niece, but the matter remained in his mind.

After Mass next morning, he met Joseph Newman and they walked a bit of the way home together, talking happily about singing.

"By the way, Joseph," Henri asked, "do you know Lincoln Calvert?"

Joseph smiled his silly beaming smile. "Sho', I know 'em," he replied. "He go to Cornell to learn farmin'. He sort of funny, too. 'E put firecrackuh een Mr. Harry Rutledge stove at de high school." He was so impressed with this scholastic feat that he could scarcely restrain loud laughter even on Sunday.

"Hm," Henri said.

"People say 'e uncle sen' 'em to Cornell because 'e can' go to Clemson. 'E git een trouble about some gal up there one summer." Joseph's open simple face looked serious at this breach of etiquette. "Course, they Protestants," he said, "and maybe 'e morals ain't so good."

"I don't think I'd put it quite so strongly, Joseph," Henri said. "We mustn't allow ourselves to be bigoted. There are a lot of perfectly nice Protestants who are just like us."

"They don't like us, though. Them old ladies at the boarding house don't like to give me fish and eggs on Friday."

"It can be irritating," Henri said. "There's no doubt of it, we are looked down on as a group. This is a very Protestant city."

"Sho is," Joseph said.

"It is important," Henri said, "for us not to do anything to cast discredit on our group. Always remember that."

"Yas, suh."

"And I'm going to leave you here. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, suh," Joseph said. "I hopes to see you again soon. I tell Leonie I comin' over some night. I don't like to be too eager."

"Now that's a nice boy," Henri said to himself. "Not brilliant, but he has the right sort of notions. Nice voice, too. I wonder why Leonie has to prefer that Calvert scamp. A man who's been publicly known to be in trouble over a gyirl."

A cold damp wind of memory reminded Henri of his own narrow escape from an irate father by means of a leap out of a window.

"But that wasn't a respectable gyirl," he argued to himself, assuming readily the belief that Lincoln Calvert had seduced and ruined some innocent and lovely maiden. "And what," he thought, "can you expect of the nephew of a man who everybody says has colored children?"

Chapter Thirteen

THE FORMAL INVITATION from Cousin Annette arrived just at the right time. All morning, in the blazing heat, Henri had been worrying about Leonie. Leonie had always been delicate, a condition Cousin Julie attributed to the eating of bananas at an early age in Guatemala.

At dinnertime he found the house charged with hostility. Heloise looked irritable and Leonie was openly sullen. The constraint was too open to be ignored, and after Heloise had conscientiously asked about the office, Henri, a little crossly, inquired what was the matter.

"You ask Leonie," Heloise said.

"Uncle," Leonie said, "Cousin Annette wrote asking me to come up to the country with them, and Auntie says she doesn't think we ought to accept."

"I told her," Heloise said calmly, "that it would mean new clothes as well as railroad fare and that she would have to offer at least to pay board."

"And I think that's nonsense," Leonie said sharply. "An invitation is an invitation."

"Your aunt is absolutely right," Henri said. "It is not nonsense. Of course you should be in a position to offer to pay your board. It wouldn't be honest to offer to pay it unless you had it. We'll talk about it later, eh? Perhaps I can find some way."

Leonie was disappointed. She had expected an immediate favorable decision. Her sulkiness had not resulted from any doubt about the outcome, but simply from the fact that her aunt, during their discussion, had added a few bits of unsolicited advice on conduct in general.

"It wouldn't really cost much," she argued. "The fare and a couple of things for the little boys and Betsy. I've got a good many summer things and the only extra thing I'd need would be a riding habit. I can't borrow one because I'm so small."

"Of course," Heloise said, "you're perfectly willing to walk the whole way to Union Station and even up to the mountains. Before the invitation is accepted. It's only afterwards that you'll think of this and that and the other thing that you need."

"I never—" Leonie tried to protest, but Henri interrupted. He had a new idea.

"Leonie," he asked, "you rode at college, didn't you?"

"Yes, Uncle."

"I hope you always rode sidesaddle."

"Well, I didn't. Nobody rides sidesaddle now except a few old ladies."

"I don't like to see young ladies riding astride," Henri said. "It's like crossing your limbs when you sit down."

"Uncle, you sound just like Sister Immaculata," Leonie said. But she did not pursue the argument further. She drank her coffee and then, as if sensing that it would be tactful to withdraw from the discussion, she asked to be excused and went upstairs.

Henri looked at Heloise. "I suppose we could find the money," he said hesitatingly.

"You always say that. I say the line ought to be drawn somewhere. Leonie has got to understand sooner or later that money doesn't grow on trees."

"But," Henri argued, "I hate to think of that poor little orphan in all this heat."

"Poor little orphan," Heloise said mockingly. "The poor little orphan has had four years at an expensive college and everything her heart could wish for, besides enough petting and spoiling to ruin her. As far as the heat goes, if she can't stand it now what's she going to do in July and August? And just remember this, Brother. It's about time we began to lay something aside for our old age. If you're thinking of Leonie, remember Papa and Mama and how hard it was for them to feel that they were dependent on us for everything."

"I never begrudged one cent that went to take care of Papa and Mama," Henri said bristling.

"Of course you didn't. You never begrudge anything. You remind me of a camel. Someday there's going to be a last straw that will break your back, too."

Henri sighed. "I only want to keep the child as contented as possible," he explained. "I don't want her to feel that anything would

be better than the poor kind of life she leads with us. I don't want her to rush out and take the first offer she gets from some young man who sees how pretty she is."

He looked so plaintive that Heloise regretted having spoken so sharply.

"I didn't mean to sound disagreeable, Brother," she apologized. "Goodness knows, I don't want to deprive the child of anything. It does seem to me, though, that she's got to learn that she can't have everything she wants just by looking pretty."

"It isn't that I want to send her away," Henri said. "I've looked forward for years to having her with us all the time."

Heloise looked at him in wonderment.

"Brother, do you mean that? You ought to realize for your own good that she's grown up and ready to marry. And really, you're happiest when she's not too close. When she is here you worry about something or other from morning till night."

"There's no hurry about getting her married," Henri said.

"She'd better not wait, if she knows what's good for her," Heloise retorted, and something in her tone made Henri flush. He sighed. He put down his coffee cup and wiped his mustaches.

"I think we'll have to send her to the country," he remarked. "Now I've got to be getting back to the office. Don't say any more to Leonie. We don't have to make up our minds this minute."

Leonie seemed quite cheerful that evening. She did not mention her trip to the mountains, but laughed and smiled and made light of the heat. After supper she got a box of chocolates from the sideboard and offered them.

"Chocolates?" Henri inquired, looking for one with a hard center.

"Lincoln Calvert sent them."

Henri drew a breath. He held the candy he had selected in his fingers, uncertainly, as if he didn't know whether to eat it or not. "Leonie," he said, "do you think you ought to accept gifts from that young man?"

"I've known him ever since we were children," Leonie reminded her uncle, "and I certainly can't see that there's any harm in accepting a box of candy."

"Just don't eat them too fast," Heloise advised. "They're bad for your skin."

"Do you think it was proper for her to accept candy from that young blagyard?" Henri asked, after Leonie had gone upstairs.

"Perfectly. I can't see any objection."

"Well, I won't say anything more about it," Henri conceded, "unless his gifts become too personal." He looked up to see Leonie in the hall. "Going out, my dear?" he called to her.

"I'm going out in the Garrisons' boat," Leonie said. "It's too hot to do anything else. Everybody else is out on the Battery or on the Pond. Why don't you go sit in the fresh air, Uncle?"

"Oh, I'll stay around here. Don't be out too late."

"And don't rock the boat," Heloise said with a wink.

Henri looked up inquiringly as the girl went out. "The ways of the young," he said, "are beyond me. She's going down to sit in that bateau and listen to those boys singing and playing guitars."

"You were young once," Heloise said, "remember?"

On Tuesday Leonie complained of a headache, although she ate dinner and supper, but later, despite Henri's urgings to go back to bed, she remained downstairs, strumming ragtime (which Henri loathed) on the cracked piano.

"The way that child is wasting the bright hours of her life," he fretted.

Leonie did not long persist in wasting the bright hours of her life. Within a short time the bell rang. The caller was Lincoln Calvert. Not long after his arrival Leonie went upstairs and returned, and Henri heard the front door close.

Heloise, when he went to her room to confer about this, said that the young people had gone out for a walk along the Battery. "They'll stop on the way and have a soda," she explained somewhat wistfully.

"Leonie could at least have said good-bye to me," Henri said jealously. "She could have brought that fellow in to say good-evening."

"Probably they didn't want to interrupt your studies," Heloise said.

Henri returned to the dining room. Why, he wondered, had Providence sent this young man back to Charleston, when he had all the rest of the United States at his disposal?

"I'll tell her if she mentions it that she can go to the mountains," he decided. "But she'll have to bring it up. If I do, Heloise will say I'm too indulgent."

Chapter Fourteen

HOWEVER, LEONIE SAID nothing more about the mountains. Lincoln Calvert came twice more to see her, she seemed gay and oblivious of the heat, and now she had Henri at a disadvantage and he knew it.

Something would have to be done about that invitation. It was rude to defer their answer as long as they had—and worse than that, the length of time before they answered would have already made it seem that they were deliberating about the cost. Henri could not bear to think of the O'Donnells saying among themselves, "Poor Cousin Henri just couldn't raise the money, I suppose," and then would come the really insulting phase—when Henry O'Donnell would hint, as tactfully as possible, that he would be glad to pay Leonie's railroad fare.

However, Saturday evening brought a minor bit of cheer. Antoinette informed him that Lincoln Calvert was going to be extremely busy on that new farm and he believed that Leonie, left to herself, would be only too glad to complete the separation and be sent away to the country.

On Sunday morning, when he came down to get the *News and Courier*, he found Leonie on the piazza reading it and he knew from her costume that she had already been to Mass.

"Have the Dutch taken Holland?" Henri inquired jovially.

Leonie smiled at the childhood joke. "The weather will be fair and warm," she reported.

"Well, you did the right thing to go early to Mass," Henri said. "while it was fairly cool."

"Yes," Leonie said. "By the way, Uncle, I'm going out to see Lincoln's new farm today. He wanted me to go, you remember."

Henri did not remember anything of the kind. "I suppose it will be a party," he suggested. "The Garrison girls, no doubt." He laughed hollowly. "Good day for a picnic."

"Well, no," Leonie said. "It's not a picnic, exactly. Lincoln is going to drive me over."

"You mean you intend to go alone with that boy?" Henri demanded, his mustaches bristling. "I don't think it's proper. You don't know him well—"

"Uncle," Leonie said, "you're a relic of the War. It's perfectly proper. And I do know him well. We've known each other fifteen years."

"It's not proper, that's all. Gyirls never used to go for jaunts like that with young men, alone, unless they were known to be engaged."

Leonie frowned and her eyes snapped. "You just don't want me to enjoy myself. You want me to stay bottled up between here and the Battery, learning to do tatting. That's what you sent me to college for."

"I'm thinking of what is best for you."

"I'm twenty-one. Don't you think I can decide a few things for myself?"

"It's not a question of being of age. That doesn't alter the question one jot or tittle. You're in our care before you go out into the world. And I'd like you to be less disrespectful."

"I'm not being disrespectful."

"I can remember when a lady wouldn't go down Broad Street in the daytime by herself," Henri said.

"Don't you think they were awful jackasses?" Leonie demanded. "Does Aunt Heloise have to have an escort to go down Broad Street?"

"You're just trying to make fun of me," Henri said, his voice gaining volume, "and I don't like it. This young man you propose to go traveling with is the son of one Unionist and the nephew of another!"

You cannot have a trained bass voice and expect it to perform in a murmur. Heloise appeared suddenly.

"I thought there was a murder going on," she said. "It's Sunday morning."

"Sunday morning or no Sunday morning," Henri retorted, "this child wants to go over to that fellow's farm with him, alone, and I don't approve of it."

"Is that fair?" Leonie demanded heatedly. "Why shouldn't I go?"

she shouted. "I might as well be in a convent if I'm not allowed to go for rides with young men I know well."

"Brother," Heloise said, "aren't you being a bit extreme about this?"

"I'm trying to persuade Leonie to preserve her good name," Henri thundered.

"What about you and Miss Antoinette?" Leonie demanded.

"Miss Antoinette and I have reached years of discretion. Besides, when we were young I wouldn't have dreamed of taking her alone for a ride in a car."

"There weren't any cars then," Leonie said, remorselessly literal.

Henri stamped his foot. "Naturally I meant a buggy," he said angrily. "Don't catch me up on trifles like that. I don't like it."

"Well, I don't believe you," Leonie said. "Plenty of people went about together even in those days."

"Let's go into the dining room," Heloise said. "I'm surprised at both of you, carrying on an argument like this right on the piazza."

She led the way in to breakfast, and Leonie and Henri followed, both annoyed at having their discussion broken off at a crucial point.

"It seems to me," Heloise said, "that you could have asked us our opinion first, Leonie, before you made this engagement."

"I always ask you when I think anything is going to cause inconvenience. Do I have to ask permission every time I want to go out?"

It was the most familiar type of family argument—the argument in circles; and it might have gone on indefinitely but for Henri's next remark.

"I don't approve of this young man's principles," he preluded. "I—"

Leonie stood up, flung her napkin down, and flounced out. She stopped in the doorway to denounce her uncle.

"I don't think much of persons who spy on conversations," she said. "After this I won't have my friends come to see me. I'll meet them somewhere else."

She stomped up the stairs in a fury.

Henri's breakfast was ruined.

"You're all against me," he said angrily.

"I haven't said a word," Heloise declared, "except to ask you if you didn't think you were a little bit extreme."

"You want her to go into the country with that young buck?"

"Since you ask me," Heloise said, "I can't see that any great harm will come of it. The young man isn't a stranger to us. If Leonie wants to go and see a lot of bare ground, that's up to her. It just seems foolish to me, when she don't know a cabbage from a tomato."

"Can't you see that she's infatuated with this boy? The first young fellow she sees when she comes home from college. The nephew of a blagyard and a man who has borrowed money to start in life."

"Brother," Heloise said softly, "aren't you being inconsistent?"

Henri drooped. He made noises in his throat, but he couldn't think of anything to say.

"I'll tell you another thing," Heloise said. "I've already warned you that if you oppose this friendship, you'll have a first-class love affair on your hands. It seems to me that if Leonie sees a lot of bare land and thinks once or twice of the time and work it will take to make anything out of it, she may be a little less wrapped up in the owner."

Henri still did not reply.

"Besides," Heloise went on, "think of her mortification if you make her tell that young man she can't go. I don't think it would be a good thing."

"All right," Henri said. "Let her go. Don't say that I didn't have her best interests at heart when the gossip begins."

"I don't give a sou marquee for what people say, myself," Heloise told him. "And I can't think of what harm anyone can see in a young man and a young lady going a few miles in a car."

"I'm going to put the quietus on this affair, anyway," Henri said. "I'm going to send Leonie to the mountains. Out of sight, out of mind."

Heloise did not argue. She went upstairs, and in some way she prevailed upon Leonie to come back to breakfast. Leonie, a trifle red around the eyes but otherwise as good as new, sat down without a word.

Henri cleared his throat and spoke gruffly. "You probably know what you're doing, Leonie," he said. "Just remember that if people once begin to talk about a young lady, her chances are as good as done for."

"Ish ka bibble," Leonie said.

Henri began to boil over again.

"Please don't use those common expressions," he said. "You ought to care about it, though."

"Brother," Heloise said, "Leonie is just talking. Don't pay any attention to what she says. Now this is settled. You're going to have your way, Leonie. Let's all try to enjoy breakfast."

"I'm sorry, Uncle," Leonie said. "I'll try to do everything you suggest from now on. Why don't you come with us?"

Henri stared at her. "In the first place," he said, "I haven't been to Mass, and in the second place I don't expect to be seen going around in a car with any member of the Calvert family."

"Maybe Aunt Heloise—"

"No thank you," Heloise said quickly. There was a tiny smile on her face. Leonie did amuse her.

"You don't want to get overheated," Henri said, "or drink water you don't know anything about. And mosquitoes . . . Do be careful not to get bitten. The mosquitoes are pretty bad out in the country this time of year and some people think they spread malaria."

"I'm going to wear a veil," Leonie said. "Don't worry about me, Uncle. I'm going to be all right."

But Henri's agonies were not over. Just before ten o'clock a series of explosions and rattles ended abruptly outside the house, and Henri gazing from the upstairs piazza, saw that they originated in a ramshackle Ford with a cracked windshield and a flopping fender. In the driver's seat was Lincoln Calvert, who raised his hat respectfully to Henri.

Hurrying into the hall, Henri found Leonie veiled and hatted and rushing down to answer the bell.

"You don't mean he's going to take you out riding in that thing, do you?" he protested.

"Why, it goes all right."

"But the way it looks!"

"Looks aren't everything," Leonie said gaily. "Besides, it doesn't look any worse than our house."

Henri followed her down to the front door.

"It's particularly bad, going out in a rig like that on Sunday," he objected.

"Now, Uncle," Leonie said, "don't be Charlestonian. Think of some of the carriages we've seen. Think of Dr. Forbes' buggy." She

kissed his cheek. "Do you know why Henry Ford is a bigger evangelist than Billy Sunday?"

"No."

"Because," Leonie whispered, "he's shaken hell out of more people than Billy Sunday ever saw."

Before Henri could assimilate this new revelation of the younger generation's depravity, she flung open the door.

Lincoln Calvert, carrying a cap and goggles, gave them both a hearty good-morning. "All ready?" he inquired. "Like to come along, Mr. Lemay? This Ford is better than a horseback ride for what ails you."

Henri ignored such familiarity. "I hope," he said coldly, "that you know how to run that thing, young man."

"A Ford runs on its reputation," Lincoln said. "Come on, Leonie, before it decides not to go at all. I already spent fifteen minutes cranking it. They say Ford's next one is going to run without gasoline, just springs like a clock."

Leonie waved, and the disreputable vehicle clattered off in a cloud of violet smoke.

"This is the last straw," Henri complained to Heloise, who was preparing to go to Mass. "Taking Leonie out in that old wreck that's not fit for a nigger to ride to work in."

"Maybe it's all he can afford. It reminded me of Mr. Jacobson's buggy with half the top torn off. Well, I'm going. I suppose it will be hot."

"Probably," Henri said. "Heloise, I don't like that fellow. There's something about him I don't trust. One of the reasons he had to go to school up North—"

But Heloise was already trotting along the flagstone pavement and did not hear him.

The semi-transient cat, snoozing on the piazza, was the only thing handy, and Henri kicked him.

"Why don't you catch a few rats and mice instead of lying around on your belly all day?" he inquired.

The cat slunk away.

"My niece out with that ruffian. In the open country," poor Henri growled wretchedly. "I don't know why I'm so weak that I always give in to her. No good will come of this infatuation. Well, that settles it. Off she goes to the country this week."

He looked up at the sky but was unable to find any signs of rain.
 "And that joke about Billy Sunday," he grumbled. "I'll bet he told her that."

The younger generation, there was no doubt of it, was wild.

Chapter Fifteen

LEONIE AND LINCOLN rattled away, oblivious of the fact that dozens of eyes were registering their trip.

"Sure is nice you could come," Lincoln said, trying to keep the flivver from flying apart in the rutted macadam roadway. He squeezed the horn at a group of colored urchins, who stared resentfully at the car as it passed.

"I'm glad I could," Leonie said. "It's nice to get out in the open."

Lincoln swung into Spring Street, and headed for the rickety structure known reminiscently as the New Bridge. They waited for the tollkeeper to come, after which they rattled across the resonant planking and onto the heavy dirt road in St. Andrew's Parish.

"There's a fortune to be made over here," Lincoln said. "Land that just needs a little modern scientific care and you can get two big crops out of it every year."

Leonie stared through the heavy growth of Spanish moss, and out on either side to the neglected fields. They passed a long row of Negro cabins, landscaped with washtubs, old wheels, and broken boxes, and Lincoln called her attention to them.

"Give these people half a chance," he said, "and they could be of value to the community."

"Do you really think they're worth it?" Leonie asked.

"Yes, I do, Leonie," Lincoln said, "and don't begin calling me a nigger-lover, either."

"I didn't call you anything," Leonie said.

"What I meant was," Lincoln explained, "that I look at the matter from a purely economic view. No matter what you think of the colored man as a person, he's very important to the South. There are so many of them. Every one of them could have something to contribute."

"You know," Leonie said, "you *are* something like your uncle."

"My uncle," Lincoln said, "is one of the very few reasonable peo-

ple I know when it comes to certain matters. He never let anybody do his thinking for him, either.

"People think he's a nut," Lincoln went on, "but he's just fifty years ahead of his time, that's all. I know, I get sore at him sometimes because his ideas make me stand out from other people. Well, never mind Uncle Eddie. What I was going to say was, I'd like to get rich enough and own enough land around here to teach these people to farm the right way. I'd like to have a good school for their children—a farming school like the trade school at Jenkins' Orphanage. If you want to do something useful with your life that's the way to do it. I guess you think I sound foolish, Leonie."

"No, I don't," Leonie said.

"I'm talking big," Lincoln said with sudden bitterness, "when I haven't even got the money to pay for my little truck farm. First of all I've got to get that started and put up a decent house, and then I've got to pay back the money I've borrowed."

He ran the Ford along a bumpy wagon track and stopped it at a barred gate.

"Calvert's Folly," he said, pointing to a long stretch of flat land badly grown over with weeds and canes. "Watch your skirts and look out for holes. Here, I'll take that basket."

He swung the picnic basket under his arm, gave Leonie a hand, and led her through the gate to a closer view of his hopes.

"The child's all right," Heloise insisted. "For Heaven's sake, Brother, stop fretting. You don't flatter her intelligence, I must say. Eat your dinner."

"Well, she's going to the mountains this week or I'll know why," Henri said. "I wish you'd write to Annette right away. If we take any longer about answering they'll think we're very ill-mannered, and worse than that, they'll think we are considering the expense."

"They'll know we are."

"I don't want them to have any cause to," Henri said doggedly. "Henry O'Donnell's purse proud enough as it is."

"It seems to me that Henry is very kind to ask her. That boarding house is expensive."

"Hm," Henri said.

Heloise knew it was useless to argue about the motives of Henry O'Donnell—as useless as it would have been to try to dissuade her

brother from sending Leonie to the mountains in spite of his pride about accepting favors. She attempted a diversion.

"Poor old Miss Susan Williams has been shut in all these weeks with her lumbago. I think we ought to pay her a call. It's only Christian charity."

"That old scandalmonger," Henri grumbled. "All right, I suppose we ought to. But for Heaven's sake, Sister, don't tell her anything about our business. You know what she is."

"Thank you," Heloise said. "I am in the habit, I suppose, of informing all and sundry about our affairs."

"We ought to take her something," Henri said.

"Miss Susan doesn't expect anything from us."

"She has no right," Henri said, "not to expect anything from us."

"Pick her a bunch of sweet peas," Heloise advised. "They're doing very nicely now. She doesn't want anything to eat. She lives on Peruna and Fleischmann's porous plasters. So Cousin Julie says."

"Suppose Leonie comes in while we're out?"

"Leonie has lived in this house long enough," Heloise said, "to know that the key is under the doormat."

Henri gathered the sweet peas, gave a final twirl to his mustaches and they set out.

"Thank God Miss Susan doesn't live any farther off than Vanderhorst Street," Heloise said. "The heat is like an oven today. I can smell pluff mud all the way from East Bay."

Gravely, Henri considered the wind.

"I think the smell comes from the Ashley," he said. "The breeze is west."

"One is no better than the other," Heloise said. "There's Miss Genevieve McMann warming her chair on the piazza."

Henri swept off his hat to the old lady and quickened his step. However, and he thought peevishly that Heloise might have foreseen this, Mrs. McMann was not a person you could pass by.

"Heloise," she called, "do come in. Do come in, Henri."

"Thank you," Heloise said, "we're going to visit Miss Susan Williams."

"I heard she was laid up," Miss Genevieve said. "She's been under the doctor for some time, though. She says," continued Miss Genevieve, whose voice was one that carried, "that it's lumbago. I know better. It's her kidneys."

"God!" Henri muttered.

"All the Williamses," said Miss Genevieve, "had Bright's disease. Her mother was so dropsical they had to tap her every week."

"Your house looks nice with the new sidewalk," Henri said, in a desperate attempt to end these pathological revelations.

"You can have it," said Miss Genevieve. "I've already written to the City Council about it. I told them they were charging me too much assessment and that I wouldn't pay it until they could prove that the bill was honest. Somebody is feathering his nest at the City Hall. You wait until I see Billy Glynn. I'll tell him what I think of his Board of Aldermen! I wanted to see him elected because all the bigots were trying to do him out of it, but—"

Henri made a move to urge Heloise along.

"—I'm beginning to regret my opinion," Miss Genevieve continued. "I was satisfied with flagstones, and macadam streets are good enough for anybody. Did you know they're going to condemn all the privies?"

"No, I didn't," Heloise said, struggling not to laugh. "Well, we must be going along. Good-bye, Miss Genevieve. Remember us to all the family. Don't walk so fast, Henri, you're making me puff."

But Henri, purple with mortification, strode along.

"I'll be damned if I ever subject myself to passing that vulgar old woman's house again," he spluttered. "It's disgraceful. Thank God little Leonie wasn't along to hear all that."

Heloise shrugged almost imperceptibly. "Any child who's been brought up by a colored nurse," she said, "has heard worse than that. I'm afraid you're forgetting some of the language Leonie picked up when she was little."

"That was long ago."

"Well, anyway," Heloise said, "the word 'privy' is not going to come up and bite her."

Miss Susan Williams lived in a tiny rattletrap house attended only by an ancient colored woman named Lulu. She sat propped up in an easy chair close to the window and looking very cross.

"It was nice of you to come," she said, quaveringly. "Nobody seems to care when people get old and sick."

"Oh, people think of you," Heloise said. "Now there was Miss Genevieve McMann, and she sent you her very best regards."

"Genevieve McMann," said Miss Susan slowly and thoughtfully.

"She's having a duck fit because she says they assessed her too much for the paving in front of her house. Yes, just put the sweet peas there, Heloise. Thank you. Well," Miss Susan said, putting her hand upon her stick, "I suppose she's forgotten all about 1887. It was her own brother that juggled the accounts in the city treasury. That's where they got the money to buy that house. I'm sure Henri remembers it."

"Not very well," Henri said.

"Well, that's what happened," said Miss Susan. "There's a lot of people in Charleston with skeletons in their closets."

"Indeed," Heloise said.

"Of course, I don't get around as well as I did," Miss Susan complained, "and I'm slow hearing about things. It was only the other day I heard that Eddie Calvert's nephew had bought a farm with the money he won gambling up North."

"He what?" Henri asked, pricking up his ears.

"Didn't you know that?" Miss Susan asked. "I thought, since everybody says he is going with Leonie, that you'd have heard about it."

"We knew he had bought a farm," Heloise said quickly. "But it's not true that he's going with Leonie. He's only been to visit her once or twice."

"Humph," said Miss Susan, well aware of the effect she had produced. "Of course, people talk. I can't make sure that what I hear is true because I'm kept so close to the house now. Is it true, Henri, that Antoinette Fielding is going to keep a boarding house?"

"Nothing of the kind, Miss Susan," Henri said. "I know from her own lips that she's going to take in a few guests during the winter season."

"It just goes to show," said Miss Susan, "how people twist things to suit themselves. When is little Leonie going up to the country?"

"Oh, very soon," Henri said. "Probably this coming week."

"I heard they had asked her," said Miss Susan. "Henry O'Donnell must be doing well. He takes all that raft of children up to the mountains every summer and there's always a friend or two."

"It was very generous of Henry to ask Leonie to come up," Henri said, annoyed at the suggestion that of course Leonie would have to be the recipient of generosity. However, he could say nothing without its getting back to Henry O'Donnell.

"We're very pleased," he went on. "It will do Leonie good to get away from the heat. We even think of sending her up to Virginia, where she has friends she made at college."

"Indeed!" Miss Susan exclaimed.

"We want Leonie to have every chance for a good time," Henri said pompously.

"That's all the young think about," Miss Susan quavered. "Pleasure, pleasure, pleasure! From what I hear, a lot of them had better think about their immortal souls. I don't like this business of gyrls going around unchaperoned."

"I don't either," Henri said.

"Such things weren't done in our day," said Miss Susan darkly. "I remember the scolding I got once because a boy brought my books home from school."

Heloise laughed. "Now, Miss Susan," she said, "you know lots of boys have brought gyrls' books home from school, even in our day."

"Of course my father was very strict," said Miss Susan. "He didn't like us to have anything to do with boys. Even after we were young ladies. Sometimes I wonder how I ever got married."

It was well known to everyone that Miss Susan had eloped, but she chose to ignore this and went on to a long disquisition on her father's strictness.

"We must be going," Heloise said. "We don't want to tire you out, Miss Susan. You come to see us whenever you feel well enough."

"I will, Heloise. I want to hear you play Leybach's 'Fifth Nocturne,'" said Miss Susan, "and maybe Henri will sing."

"Delighted to," Henri said, pleased as always to have his forte remembered.

"I'm glad the rat bite was no worse," Miss Susan said, thereby erasing the good mark she had gained by mentioning his voice.

"That old woman knows everything," Henri said as soon as they were out of hearing.

"She does, indeed," Heloise said. "It's all over Charleston that Leonie is going with Lincoln Calvert, and now Miss Susan will make it her business to tell everybody that we disapprove of it. She'll say that we're sending Leonie away all the time to keep the two of them apart."

"We shouldn't have gone to see that old scandalmonger," Henri grumbled.

"Christian charity requires us to visit the sick. Besides," Heloise said with a laugh, "I thought we might find out something interesting."

"The only thing we've found out," Henri said, "is that this young ruffian got his money for that farm by gambling."

"I don't believe it," Heloise said. "Nobody's luck is that good."

"I don't like to think of that innocent child off in the open country with a libertine and a gambler—"

Heloise interrupted him by pointing ahead to the house.

"I guess Leonie's home," she said. "The front windows are up."

They found Leonie in high spirits. She answered their inquiries with a flood of enthusiastic information about the projects and visions Lincoln Calvert had divulged.

"It's so wonderful!" Leonie said. "To take bare land like that and transform it into a beautiful home and a model truck farm! Did you know that Lincoln was going to teach all the Negroes to farm the way he learned up at Cornell? That's one of the reasons why he was so anxious to start. He says it's a social project as well as a personal one."

"I hope he'll be very successful," Heloise said doubtfully. "It's been my experience that it's very hard to teach Negroes anything different."

"I can see," Henri said, "that Abolitionist strain is still strong in the Calvert family."

"Oh, I don't think Lincoln goes that far," Leonie protested. "But he says the future of the South is bound up with what the colored people are able to do for themselves. He says that as long as they are an economic liability the South will always be poor and backward."

"It sounds very fine," Henri said sourly. "There's nothing the matter with the South except that it is trying to copy the rest of the country and be modern instead of preserving its own good qualities."

"Do you want to stand still forever?" Leonie asked, exasperated.

"Well, I don't say I want to stand still," Henri replied, "but things are moving too fast for me. In my lifetime I've seen electricity, and electric street cars, and automobiles."

"Uncle," Leonie said, "you are an enemy of progress."

"You don't say," Henri answered. "Well, we are getting away from the point. When do you want to start for the mountains?"

Leonie looked surprised. "Why?"

"Your aunt and I have been talking it over, and we have come to the conclusion that you need mountain air," Henri said. "We think you look a little pale. Besides, there is so little for a young person to do here in the summer besides gossiping and idleness—"

"I don't intend to be idle," Leonie said. "I've planned to go to the Museum and things like that. I'm going to write an article on the experiments in growing tea in Summerville." She looked quite pink in the heat of self-defense.

"We did not intend any criticism, dear," Henri said. "We didn't mean that you wanted to be idle. What we meant was that you had very little chance to be anything *but* idle. Now don't go around getting mad at little things people say."

"Oh, well," Leonie said, "I suppose I can stand two weeks in Haynesville. When do you want me to start?"

"Leonie," Heloise said sharply, "going to the mountains was your own wish and your uncle has to make an effort to give you these things you ask for. Now you turn around and get saucy about it. I'm surprised at you. I think you owe your uncle an apology."

"Oh," Leonie said lightly, "Uncle and I understand each other. Don't we, Uncle?" She put an arm around him and gave him a kiss on his cheek.

"You flattering little devil," Henri said.

"That's settled," Leonie said. "I can go any day. All we have to do is let Cousin Annette know, and then I can go over to Kerrison's and get a trunkful of clothes—"

"Yes," Heloise said, her good-humor restored, "and you'd better buy two trunkfuls. One for going and one for coming. We'll talk about the things you need tomorrow."

They bustled out to get supper, and Henri sat on the piazza to think. Leonie would go away for two weeks—that was settled, thank Heaven. This infatuation for young Calvert might not outlast the separation. He smiled fondly at the thought of Leonie's enthusiasm for the young fellow's projects. The usual castles in Spain of the young. A crop failure or two and the scamp would go right back North and that would be the end of him.

He felt a good deal better by suppertime.

"I suppose you realize," he said to Leonie, "what a farmer's life is like."

"My grandfather was a farmer, wasn't he?" Leonie inquired.

"He was a planter," Henri corrected.

"Well, a planter. What's the difference?"

"There's a considerable difference," Henri said. A farmer, he thought, was a self-employed laborer with a red neck and whiskers and a straw hat and overalls. A planter was a gentleman.

"And what did grandfather raise?"

"Rice," Henri said, "before the War. Cotton, too."

"Who owns the land now?" Leonie demanded.

"Oh, it passed from hand to hand," Henri said. "First one of the Desnoyers bought it, and then an Irishman named McGrory, and then an Italian who thought he would raise cabbages. It belongs to the People's Bank now."

"And what's happening to it?" Leonie persisted.

Henri sighed wearily. "Nothing," he said. "Everything is all grown over, and the house is falling down, and there are a few colored people who eke out a living from a few acres they get for taking care of the place."

Leonie was thoughtful. "If we get that money," she said, "we could buy it back and work it again. I heard Cousin Henry say there might be a fortune in Sea Island cotton."

"No, thank you," Henri said. "I don't believe I want to spend my last years on earth worrying about boll weevils."

"Maybe I'll have to buy the old place myself," Leonie said. "Then you and Auntie can come to live with me. Auntie can have charge of the housekeeping."

"Auntie will have charge of sitting on the front piazza," Heloise said.

"Those were the days, though," Henri said. "Heloise, remember the dinners, Christmas and other big days? And the time I went around and drank all the wine that was left in the glasses and got tipsy? I must have been ten years old, but I remember it perfectly."

"I was nine when the War began," Heloise said, "but somehow I mostly remember being hungry."

Leonie, with four sandwiches and several glasses of tea inside her, did not appear impressed by this mention of underfeeding.

"If all of you hadn't been so anxious to have a war," she said, "all that would never have happened."

Heloise's eyebrows lifted, but she said nothing. Henri was indignant.

"Do you mean that you think we should have allowed the Yankees to do whatever they liked?" he thundered. "I never heard the like, not in my own family."

Leonie looked at him, half-amused, and then went upstairs, remarking that she had to write some letters.

"It was about time we decided on that trip," Henri said. "That boy has already begun to corrupt her mind. 'If we hadn't been so determined to have a war.'" He began to pace up and down. "If I hadn't promised that I'd let things take their course," he said, looking over his glasses at Heloise, "I'd give that young blagyard a piece of my mind."

"I do think," Heloise said, "that Leonie has come under his influence in a very short while.

"All that interest in the old Edisto place. A new bee in her bonnet. Farming." She began to laugh. "Leonie's being a farmer's wife," she said, "and getting up at five in the morning." And she laughed until Henri was bewildered. He didn't see any humor in the situation.

Chapter Sixteen

HENRI WAS IN good spirits the next evening. Having further extended his credit—this time from the Morris Plan offices, since he did not care to return too soon to the obliging Mr. Pincus—he felt delightfully flush, even though he had already spent some of the money for Leonie's ticket.

"Well, my dear child, we're going to lose you again for a while," he said as they sat down to supper. "Here we've hardly got you back and we just don't feel that we can stand having you around any longer."

"Maybe I won't come back," Leonie said, entering into his joke. "Maybe I'll fall in love with one of the young men at the boarding house and elope with him."

Henri laughed gruffly. "I expect your Cousin Annette to keep a very sharp eye on you," he said, willing to jest about purely hypothetical suitors.

"I do hope," Heloise said, in one of her rarer fits of seriousness, "that you're not going to give Annette any trouble. I mean going off places without telling her and that sort of thing."

"I'll do everything possible not to worry Cousin Annette," Leonie said. "I won't make them regret their hospitality."

Henri cleared his throat. "In that connection," he said, "I want to remind you of something. We are giving you enough money to pay your own board, you remember."

Leonie indicated that she had heard.

"Naturally," Henri went on, "we understand that you are Henry O'Donnell's guest. On the other hand, it is presumptuous to accept such an invitation without showing some willingness to pay your own expenses."

"It sounds like bad manners to me," Leonie said.

Henri stiffened. "You don't understand these things," he said, "as well as we do."

"Still, Uncle, if people invite you they ought—"

"Now wait a minute. It isn't that we are ungrateful or unappreciative. But by showing that you are able to provide for yourself, you make it more comfortable for everybody concerned. No one can say that you are trying to sponge—"

"Just tell Cousin Henry that you don't like to feel you are imposing on him," Heloise explained.

"Just a minute, Sister," Henri said, not willing to be deprived of a chance at theorizing. "We want Leonie to understand this thoroughly." He held the first two fingers of his right hand close together as he often did when engaged in earnest explanation. "Now, Leonie," he went on, waving them toward her, "by suggesting politely that you did not expect this to be a gratuitous invitation, you make it plain that you are accepting, not out of necessity, but out of pleasure."

"It sounds very roundabout to me. And hypocritical besides," Leonie objected.

"Listen to your uncle, dear," Heloise said.

"In this particular case," Henri said, "it is necessary to be very careful. Your Cousin Henry was a very poor young man, and I'm afraid that he is overly sensitive about his ability to provide money. So don't be insistent. When he comes up for Saturday or Sunday, you say to him, when you are alone, that it's wonderful of him to think of giving you this holiday, but your aunt and uncle don't feel that it's right that he should assume—well, better come right out and say expenses. He'll say of course not, that he never dreamed of such a thing. And then you say that it's wonderfully kind of him, or very sweet, or some girlish expression like that. Put it your own way."

"It sounds," Leonie said, "like something they might do in China."

Henri knew that it was difficult for the young to understand the fine points of being poor with dignity.

"In such a situation, you will always have the satisfaction of knowing that nobody can say behind your back that you had a lot of cheek to expect everything without offering to do your share."

Leonie rose and asked to be excused.

"Just try to remember what I've said," Henri told her.

"I will, Uncle. But I still think 'thank you' would be enough."

Henri looked at her loftily.

"You know as well as I do," he said, settling the question then and

there, "that no lady or gentleman ever accepts a gift without protesting a little."

Leonie was beaming at dinner next day, and still more at supper.

"We'll all have a pleasant farewell evening," Henri said. "What would you say to a game of euchre, and we can have some lemonade too?"

Leonie did not burst into cheers at this suggestion.

"That would be fun," she said slowly, "but, Uncle, Lincoln Calvert is coming to tell me good-bye."

"Very well," Henri said. "We are only your old uncle and aunt and we don't count when some adventurer is coming to see you."

"Uncle, I don't see why you're so hard on Lincoln. He's a nice boy. He has good manners and he's ambitious and—"

"I don't want to hear any more about him," Henri said.

Leonie frowned, but she rose and went upstairs without insisting on their approval.

"We're nothing," Henri growled. "We don't count."

"Brother, it's only natural that the young man should come to see her when she's going away for two weeks."

"She could pay us a little attention."

"Children never do. I'm going to write some letters. Do you want to bring your books and things upstairs?"

"No indeed," Henri said. "I'm going to stay where I can exercise some sort of restraining influence."

He was improving his account of the Edisto plantation when the bell rang.

Lincoln Calvert stood at the front door with a box under his arm and a disarming smile.

"Good-evening, Mr. Lemay," he said. "How are you, sir?"

"Good-evening," Henri responded gruffly. "Won't you come in?" He did not hold out his hand and he hoped that this snub was felt. "Leonie will be here in a minute," he said. "Sit down, please." He took the young man's straw hat and hung it on the rack.

"Thank you, sir," Lincoln said. "It's been hot, hasn't it?"

"Yes, it has," Henri replied.

"It will be nice for Leonie to go away."

"We consider that it will be very good for her," Henri said, looking fixedly at the boy.

But Lincoln was no longer paying him any attention, for Leonie had appeared.

"Leonie!" he greeted her enthusiastically.

"Lincoln!" Leonie responded. "It was so nice of you to come."

Henri retreated to the dining room in disgust.

"I brought you some candy," Lincoln said.

"Why, you oughtn't to do this," Leonie said. "Every time you come to see me—"

"Have you got any left?"

"No."

"Well, then, you needed some more."

"I suppose you're right," Leonie said. "I'm going to open it this minute." She untied the string. "Whitman's!"

Lincoln drew up two of the piazza rockers. He poked his feet through the spaces between the banisters. "It's going to be a long two weeks," he said.

"Oh, I'll be back before you realize it."

"I meant that seriously."

"It's nice like this," Leonie said. "How were things at the farm today?"

"I felt sort of discouraged. There's so much to be done and it's so hard getting started. There's nothing in the courses I've taken about how you ought to feel when a piece of harness breaks or a hand loses a brand-new tool."

"Oh, you'll get along," Leonie said. "With your training and your ambition."

She was hoping that he would say something about the end result of all this striving, but just then the rattly bell rang and she leapt to answer it. She flung open the door on Joseph Newman.

"Good-evenin', Leonie," he said, grinning broadly. "I hear you goin' away tomorrow and I come to say good-bye. How all the folks?"

"We're all fine," Leonie said, resignedly. "Here, let me take your hat, Joseph." It made a very poor show beside Lincoln's gleaming Panama. "You and Lincoln Calvert know each other, don't you?"

"Oh, sho," Joseph said. "How you, Lincoln?"

"How are you, Joe?" Lincoln responded.

There was a roll of papers under Joseph's arm. He handed it to Leonie.

"The 'Ave Maria,'" he explained. "I thought you might learn to play it for me sometime."

"Why, certainly," Leonie said. "You know, Lincoln, Joe has a fine voice."

"That so?"

Joseph smiled modestly. "Oh 'e ain't so fine as all that," he protested. "They ain't many tenors and everybody think a tenor is good because they scarce. How you comin' along with the farm?"

"I'm doing all right."

"You gointa plant truck, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well," Joseph said, "I glad I ain't got to worry about 'em. I goes back to college in October. I gointa git a job here for the summer. After I git my diploma I goin' up North."

"That'll be great," Lincoln said. He turned to Leonie. "You'll be nice and cool up there in the mountains," he said, "while the rest of us down here will be getting hotter by the minute."

Leonie nodded. Joseph looked thoughtful.

"They got a piano up there?" he inquired.

"I think so," Leonie said. "Why?"

"I thought maybe you could spend a little time—on rainy days, you know," Joseph explained, "practising some songs. Then we could do 'em together when you git back."

Leonie laughed. "Oh, it takes an awful lot of practice for me to play anything," she said proudly.

"I bring a couple of seegyars for Mr. Lemay," Joseph said, tapping his breast pocket. "Fellow give 'em to me. I don't smoke on account of my voice."

"I'll go tell him," Leonie said. "I know he'll be pleased. Uncle," she said, putting her head in the doorway, "Joe Newman wants to see you."

"You been up North, Lincoln. You ever hear Caruso?" Joseph asked.

"No. I've never been to the opera. I haven't got any taste for music."

"Man," Joseph said, "if I ever git to New York—Yuccum Mr. Lemay. Good-evenin', suh. How you?"

Henri shook hands with him. "And how is your mother?"

"She fine. I bring you a couple of seegyars," Joseph said, taking

them without ceremony from his pocket and holding them out to Henri. "You know," he added, "I ain't smoke."

"Thank you," Henry said, pocketing the gift casually and wondering what the boy could be thinking of to present him publicly with two cigars. "I'll smoke one later. I just finished my after-supper one."

Leonie raised her eyebrows. She had not seen her uncle smoke since her return from Baltimore.

"I hope you like 'em," Joseph said. "Mr. Lemay, won't you sing a song for us, suh?"

"Oh, nobody wants to hear an old man," Henri said.

"Of course we all want to hear you, Uncle," Leonie said.

"Please sing, sir," Lincoln said.

"I'll have to call Miss Lemay," Henri said. "She's my official accompanist. You'll sing us a song or two, won't you, Joseph?"

Joseph agreed.

"I'll go and get Auntie," Leonie said.

She went up the stairs half in tears with vexation. "Auntie," she said, "you're in demand. Joseph and Uncle are determined to sing."

"My goodness," Heloise said. "How did your uncle manage to butt into the party?"

"Joe wanted to give him a couple of cigars. Uncle put them in his pocket. He told Joe," she added, laughing in spite of her annoyance, "that he'd just finished his after-supper one."

Heloise shook her head. "It's a windfall for Lafayette," she said. "Of course he'll never smoke them, when they were handed to him that way."

She tucked in a stray strand of hair, smoothed her dress, and followed Leonie. Joseph, in the obliging manner of singers, was waiting at the parlor door. Henri was standing awkwardly with Lincoln Calvert, neither saying a word.

After polite greetings from the young men, Heloise adjusted the stool and sat down. "You sing first," Henri said.

Joseph gave in without a struggle. "You like to play the 'Ave Maria,' Miss Lemay? Key of G."

Heloise began the introduction and Joseph took a deep breath and held his chest up high. His face twisted agonizingly. As he emitted the first words, Henri beamed approval, and he did not notice that Lincoln Calvert was beginning to cough. When Joseph

came to the final high note and twisted his mouth like a patient in the dentist's chair, Lincoln began to cough again and Leonie had to fetch him a glass of water.

"I'm all right now," he protested, taking out his handkerchief and laughing behind that, while Joseph, thoroughly pleased with himself, stood grinning.

"That was fine," Heloise said. "Now, 'I'll Sing Thee Songs of Araby.'"

Unprotected by Latin, Joseph's powerful Gullah accent came out stronger than ever. "I'll Sing Thee Songs of Africa," Lincoln whispered to Leonie, and Leonie herself was seized with a fit of coughing.

Henri sang the air from *Ernani*. He stood with his feet firmly planted, his hands clasped across his lower ribs, and his eyes closed. Even Lincoln Calvert was impressed by the great voice rolling out of the small body.

"That was wonderful, Mr. Lemay," he said honestly.

"You should have heard me fifteen years ago," Henri said.

"Couldn't have been no better," Joseph said.

With an irreducible minimum of urging, Henri added "The Heart Bow'd Down," and then insisted that they must hear one of Heloise's own songs. He sang her setting of Timrod's "Ode to the Confederate Dead," not without some thought of its effect on the nephew of a Unionist traitor.

"She compose 'em 'erself," Joseph emphasized.

"It's a great gift," Lincoln said.

"I get some fun out of it," Heloise told him. "Now I've got some letters to write, if you'll excuse me."

Henri would have liked to continue this musical soirée, but reluctantly he returned to his notes. He was pleased that Joseph had come.

Both young men were determined not to be outstayed, and they left together at ten o'clock, wishing Leonie a pleasant trip.

"An' don' forgit to practise the songs," Joseph reminded her.

When Leonie entered her aunt's room, plainly furious over the ruining of the evening, Heloise looked at her flushed face and smiled.

"He has a nice voice, that Joseph Newman," she said.

"Maybe he has," Leonie said, "but I wish he'd cut his throat."

Chapter Seventeen

THE FIRST DAYS after Leonie's departure passed pleasantly enough though it was hot. There was not a great deal of business. Cousin Eugenie had written that the lawyers were busy on the legacy but that such things, it had been explained to her, were naturally slow. At least, so Henri and Heloise had interpreted the letter, for Cousin Eugenie had the thrifty habit of crossing her writing and it was hard to decipher.

On Saturday, during his customary walk, he met Miss Julie on her way to confession, and this inspired him with the thought that it might not be a bad thing to display more piety in order to impress Leonie with the dangers of mixed marriage—not that the child would ever entertain such a foolish idea. He confessed his trespasses, and was light of heart.

In the evening he heard Antoinette's recital of her fears, her plans, and her troubles.

Sunday morning he amazed Heloise by going to early Mass and communion, for he had always been an infrequent communicant; this like many another virtuous deed brought its own reward, for he had the entire morning for puttering. After dinner he went to the band concert, chatted with friends, and retired early after supper. He thought it had been a perfect week-end, and the fact that Sunday would change the world for ever—June 28, 1914—was happily concealed from his innocent mind.

Heloise, a confirmed reader of the Graustark stories, was interested in the murder at Sarajevo, but no one else of Henri's acquaintance as much as mentioned it that Monday. Even if they had, the later events of the day would have overshadowed it completely.

For, when Henri came home for dinner, he looked through the latticework of the gate and his eyes were caught by a red placard affixed to the door of the privy.

Henri flung open the gate and rushed into the yard with a cry of

horror and despair. He read the placard, which announced simply that the fixture in question had been condemned, and then, rushing past the amazed Lafayette, charged into the house.

"Heloise!" he roared up the stairs.

Heloise appeared promptly.

"What is the meaning of this outrage?" Henri shouted.

"Now, Brother," Heloise counselled, calmly descending the stairs, "don't burst a blood vessel. Nobody will notice it. We knew they were going to condemn all the backyard toilets. You remember Miss Genevieve McMann told us about it. Lots of other people have had the same notice put up."

"I'm not going to stand for it," Henri declared violently. "They can't do a thing like this to me. Thank God little Leonie isn't here."

"I'm afraid there's nothing we can do about it," Heloise said, "except to have it cleaned out. We'll have to have a water closet put in. For Queenie and Lafayette."

Henri looked stunned.

"You wash up for dinner and we'll talk about what's to be done then."

"Nothing of the sort," Henri said, "was ever discussed at our dinner table."

"I meant afterwards," Heloise corrected.

When the table had been cleared they went out to the piazza, and Henri returned to the tabooed subject. Heloise let him thunder for a while before she suggested that he might talk it over with Henry O'Donnell.

"He'll have some idea of what to do," she said.

For anyone connected with him, Henry O'Donnell was the first recourse in difficulties. It was perhaps deplorable that Henry was doing so well for himself, but he was a rock of strength in a crisis.

"That's what I will do," Henri said. "I'd better get back to the office right away, since I'll have to leave early."

With a last wrathful look at the disgraceful sign, he left. But all afternoon it swam before his eyes, and he was so agitated by the calamity that he had to post several columns twice.

Leaving a few minutes early, he went to the offices of the Edisto Cotton Company. By the time he was announced he was almost in tears.

"Why, what's the matter, Mr. Lemay?" Henry O'Donnell inquired kindly, like a parent questioning a hurt child.

"Matter?" Henri moaned. "My credit and my reputation are ruined. They've put a red ticket on our outhouse. It's got to be cleared out and replaced by a water closet."

"You don't have to replace it," Henry said, trying not to laugh. "Just let them clear it out, tear down the boards, and plant vegetables. In a few weeks there won't be any sign of it."

"Yes, but what about our cook, Queenie?" Henri demanded. "She can't wait until she gets home."

"Let her use your toilet," Henry suggested.

"Never," Henri said. "There has to be a line drawn somewhere. Besides, there's Lafayette."

"Well," Henry said, "it's a good thing, when all's said and done. There's too much typhoid fever in this town as it is."

"It's interference with a man's private business," Henri said, indignantly. "I'll even go so far as to admit that the Board of Health has the right to remove my privy. But a red ticket, right in view of everybody! That's what I can't stand."

"I'll arrange that," Henry said, suddenly understanding what was wanted. "You go home, Mr. Lemay, and take that red sign down, and I'll tell Dr. White the first thing in the morning that I want no more of this."

"Thank you," Henri said. "I was so upset about this piece of infamous libel," he added, "that I'm afraid I've forgotten my manners. Heloise and I are very grateful to you for your kindness to Leonie."

Henry waved airily. "It's a pleasure to Annette to have her," he said.

"Of course," Henri said, "we don't want you to feel—that is, we don't really feel that you ought to do more than take care of her up there and make the arrangements. I'd like to—"

Henry O'Donnell smiled. "It was an invitation," he said. "Leonie is our guest. Of course I won't hear of any such thing."

"You're very generous," Henri said, feeling that after his long rehearsal of Leonie he had made rather a botch of asserting his independence.

"You take that money," Henry said, "and it will just about cover the expense of a good substantial, inexpensive water closet for Queenie."

But he stopped, for he knew that Henri Lemay's feelings were delicate.

"I suppose you're right," Henri said. "The way they go interfering with people, it costs more and more to live nowadays." He frowned. "I've always been a supporter of good government," he said solemnly. "I voted for the present administration. But my loyalty is shaken. Badly shaken. It seems to me the Board of Aldermen has better things to do than go around condemning privies."

"Do you know what people are calling them?" Henry O'Donnell asked. "The privy council."

"Good name," Henri said, without smiling. "Thank you for your help, Henry. And give my love to Cousin Julie and to all the family when you write."

"I certainly will," Henry said. "My love to Miss Heloise. I'm having Sarah send over a basket of figs. And please tell her to consider the car at her disposal. The family's all away, and that rascal Wallace hasn't got enough to do. I'm afraid he'll mildew."

"Thank you," Henri said, but as he went down the steps he said to himself, "I'd give a good deal to see Heloise asking for the use of their car. What does he think we are?"

He hastened home, and before going into the house tore down the red placard from the privy. He did think that he might have asked Henry O'Donnell to demand an apology, but it was too late now.

Heloise glanced up inquiringly.

"I stopped off to see Henry O'Donnell," Henri said. "And he is going to give the Health Department a piece of his mind. Meanwhile he told me to rip down that placard, and I have just done so. I put it down the privy, which was where it belonged."

Heloise laughed.

"I know you think it's a joke, Sister," Henri said, "but I can't feel that way. It's an insult to a gentleman. And we've got to spend more money."

"That's true," Heloise said.

"I offered to pay Henry for Leonie's board in the mountains, and of course he refused. He also suggested—which was none of his business, though—that the money would just about pay for a water closet."

"Very practical," Heloise said. "If there's any money left over we could have a nice trellis built in front of the door and plant some morning glories."

Henri brooded during supper. He had just finished his iced tea when Queenie entered with a note.

"Little colored boy bring 'em," she said. "'E want a message to take back."

The address, "Mr. Henri Lemay, Coming Street—Kindness of Glover," was in Antoinette's hand. Henri opened the unsealed flap, began to read, and rose from the table.

"Excuse me," he said, "but I must read this." His face was very red as he stalked out to the piazza. When Heloise joined him he was purple with rage.

"Why, this is the most outrageous thing of all!" he roared. "The idea!" He handed the letter to Heloise, and looked so fierce that the little Negro boy who was waiting shrank and braced himself against the wall of the house.

"Boy," Henri said, "you tell Miss Fielding that I'll be right over to see her." He fished in his pocket and found a nickel. "Here, you buy yourself some candy."

The child disappeared with the price of a cigar.

"It sounds," Heloise said, "as if someone was going to tear down Antoinette's rose arbor, but I suppose she means that her privy has been condemned."

"Heloise," Henri said, "of course she couldn't express herself any more plainly."

"I suppose not," Heloise said.

"The point is," Henri said angrily, "that they can't do things like this to a person like Antoinette."

"What did you expect them to do?" Heloise inquired sweetly. "Hang a pink ribbon on it?"

Henri ignored these sneers. "They couldn't have realized who they were dealing with," he persisted.

"Well," Heloise said, "I don't know that a Fielding's privy is any different from others. What are you going to do about it besides stomping up and down?"

"I'm going right back to see Henry O'Donnell, after I've talked to Antoinette."

The walk to New Street was a long one by Charleston standards, and Henri, in his upset state, had not bothered to observe the weather. As he crossed Wentworth Street a few drops of rain fell, and soon it was pouring. He reached Antoinette's house wet to the skin.

Antoinette was in tears, and she did not even notice that he was dripping water on her waxed floor.

"This is dreadful!" she wailed. "I feel as if I could never hold my head up in public again."

"It is dreadful," Henri agreed, and the embarrassment of even discussing the matter with a lady added to his distress.

"That red sign," Antoinette wailed. "They could have come to me and told me about it. It's all that man Glynn's fault."

"I'll see what can be done about it," Henri said. "I'll go over to see my cousin Henry O'Donnell, who has already agreed to act for me—"

"You mean," Antoinette asked, "that you have been—visited, too?"

"I'm afraid no one is spared," Henri said. "But my cousin will arrange it."

"It was lovely of you to come."

"It was a duty and a privilege," Henri said, wiping the rain from his face.

"I'm afraid you're wet."

"It's nothing."

"I haven't a gentleman's umbrella."

"I don't need it. I'll come right back after I've talked to Henry. Now don't worry."

Antoinette looked fretful. "I do hope they'll be careful, those men," she said, reluctantly facing the facts of life. "Great-grandfather always used the best of materials for everything, and he had—" she turned her head modestly away—"he had marble seats installed. Perhaps I'd better have them removed and put in the attic."

Henri patted her arm. "It's terrible, I know," he said, "but we must try and make the best of it."

He plodded angrily through the rain to Henry O'Donnell's house on Ashley Avenue, feeling that it was the last indignity for him to be soaked like this while on an errand of such importance.

When Sarah announced him, Henry came right out of his little office.

"Mr. Lemay! What's brought you out in weather like this, sir?"

"My boy," Henri said sepulchrally, "I'm sorry to have to trouble you again—"

"No trouble at all," Henry assured him.

"This business of condemning outhouses," Henri said, "has gone too far. They've overreached themselves now. I've just learned from Antoinette Fielding that a sign has been put on her building, too."

"You should have telephoned, Mr. Lemay," Henry said gravely, "not come out in this downpour."

Henri shrugged.

"Let me give you a drink." Henry opened a small cabinet and took a bottle and two glasses from it. He poured.

"Thank you," Henri said.

"I'll take care of Miss Fielding's difficulty, too," Henry said. "But she must realize, too, that the order stands. The vault will have to be cleared out."

"I'm sure there's no objection to that," Henri said, "except for the way they've gone about it. Now I must go."

Miss Julie, who had seen Henri from an upper window, now entered.

"Well, Henri," she boomed. "You look like a drowned rat."

The choice of simile in view of the recent fiasco was not a happy one, but Miss Julie had probably not thought of that. "How are you and how is Heloise?"

"Mr. Henri is distressed because a friend has had the same trouble as he has," Henry explained. "Miss Fielding."

Miss Julie looked surprised and, Henri thought, pleased.

"You mean they've condemned her privy?" she demanded.

"Very distressing," Henri said.

"Well," said Miss Julie, matter-of-factly, "you'd better get on home and dry off, Henri, and stop worrying about people's privies. I suppose the Fieldings' is just like anybody else's. As a matter of fact, though, I don't see for the life of me what business it is of the Board of Health. They go around worrying about privies and they let some old mossback have smallpox on Church Street and stay right there instead of sending him to the pesthouse."

"The pesthouse has been closed up," Henry explained.

"Then," said Miss Julie with irrefutable logic, "they ought to build another one. I call that straining at gnats and swallowing camels."

"It's particularly distressing about Antoinette's convenience," Henri said, "because of the fine marble seats. She hates to think of their being destroyed."

"I suppose General Lafayette sat on them," Miss Julie said. "Why don't she take them out and frame his picture with one of them? That would do."

Henri frowned at this irreverence, but Miss Julie only laughed more at her joke, and Henry O'Donnell could not help smiling himself.

"Anyway, we'll settle it, Mr. Lemay," he said. "You tell Miss Fielding not to worry her head about it. It's just routine, and they don't always think about people's feelings."

"Thank you," Henri said, "she'll be very grateful, too."

"Quite a business in Europe," Henry said. "This business of shooting the archduke. I suppose it will have repercussions."

"I can't see how it will affect us," Henri said. "I tell you, Henry, this crisis has driven it quite out of my mind."

It was typical of Henry O'Donnell, he thought, to be worrying about European politics at a time like this, when the very foundations of private rights were threatened.

"I must be going," he said.

"But in this rain—" Henry objected. "Here, let me call Wallace. He'll drive you home."

"No, no," Henri protested. "Thank you, Henry, but that's not necessary. This is just a shower."

But Henry insisted, and so Henri sat in the big high Rambler, protected from the rain. He stopped to reassure Antoinette and then Wallace drove him home.

"Good Heavens, Brother," Heloise exclaimed as the damp particle of humanity came through the door. "You'll catch your death of cold, summer or no summer."

"I'm only wet. I just need to dry off."

"I'll have to press that suit," Heloise said, "and I'm afraid the fire in the stove is going out. I'll put the irons on. You go right upstairs and take everything off and I'll make you some hot tea."

Clad in his ancient dressing gown, Henri took the wet clothes

down to Heloise. He tested the top of the stove and put his shoes on it.

"After they dry out," he said, "I'll black them and polish them."

"Now go upstairs and cover yourself up," Heloise advised.

"On such a hot night? Don't be foolish, Sister."

"I'm glad they didn't condemn Antoinette's rose arbor on a rainy winter day."

"Duty is not affected by the weather," Henri said solemnly.

Leaving Heloise to press his suit and necktie, he flapped out. He knew that Heloise resented his taking all this trouble for Antoinette and he wished she would not be so small.

He sat down in the dining room in his faded bathrobe to emend his record lists. It was insufferably hot. The rain was coming down in sheets, overrunning the gutters and splashing on the ground beside the piazza. Once he thought he felt a drop, which showed, he reflected, the powers of the imagination. And then he started as a large, entirely real drop spattered right on his neatly written pages.

Henri glanced at the ceiling. There was a large wet area there, and several large fat drops were awaiting their turn.

Snatching up his papers, he leapt into the kitchen.

"Heloise! The roof is leaking!"

His sister grabbed a large iron pot. "Take this up and put it under the leak," she commanded. "You know, Brother, we'll have to have that roof fixed. My ceiling has leaked before but this is the worst yet."

"I don't know where the money is to come from for all these improvements."

"Well, don't stand there and argue about it. Put the pan under the leak."

Henri scampered up to her bedroom, where an insistent plup-plup was audible. From the center of the ceiling, where the calcimine had flaked off as a result of several years' rains, a torrent of water was pouring. Henri, having left his pince-nez downstairs, did not notice a warning sag in the plaster. He put the cook pot under the drops, and went downstairs.

"I swear," he complained, "I think God is punishing me. Every time I look around there's a new reason to spend money."

"It's getting to be serious, Brother," Heloise said. "Eggs are twenty cents, and meat is going up. I just can't pull the strings any tighter."

"If this was a bigger city," Henri said, "I could find some extra work to do in the evening and make a little more money that way. If I was a young man, I'd go North."

Heloise sighed. "No use in talking about being young, Brother," she said. "You and I are on the downhill side and there's no good pretending we aren't."

"There aren't even the road shows any more," Henri said. "Once upon a time a young man could take a job as super and get a dollar for it besides all the fun."

That made Heloise smile again. "I'd like to see you as a super," she said. "Part of the racetrack crowd in *Checkers*, for instance. You and Colonel Beecham and Charlie Desfontaines with his telescope. You'd look fine in that bathrobe with your hair on end."

But Henri was in no mood for banter. He began to drink the tea Heloise had brought him, but he was interrupted by a crash upstairs.

"Lightning?" he inquired. "Another earthquake? What—"

"The storm's over," Heloise said. "Something must have fallen."

They rushed upstairs and Heloise struck a match.

"My heavenly fathers!" she exclaimed. "Henri, the ceiling's fallen!"

She lit the gas burner nearest the door and in the harsh light they saw that a large section of the plaster had given way.

"My God!" Henri said.

"Well, don't stand there being tragic. Let's sop this up. The bath mat. The rug's caught most of it. And I'll get the pan and brush. Thank God the part over my bed didn't come down when I was asleep."

She rushed off to the kitchen. Henri picked up a piece of plaster here and one there, and accomplished precisely nothing.

"I'll sleep in Leonie's bed tonight," Heloise said, while they were clearing up the debris. "We'll call McHugh in the morning. I suppose he'll do the whole job, roof, plastering and all."

Henri surveyed the washtub full of dirty water and plaster, and thought of what the repairs would cost.

"It's tragedy," he said. "Stark tragedy."

Chapter Eighteen

THE LAST DAY of the month was always a time of reckoning for Henri, and this thirtieth of June was a particularly bitter one. He totted up the figures—so much for insurance, so much to repay this debt, so much for that, and so much for what, entirely without humor, he referred to as his sinking fund. Now, with the prospect of a considerable outlay for repairs and the replacement of the privy by a water closet, he felt that fate, civic interference, and the forces of nature had combined to lay him very low.

He had long passed the point where any additional economies could be effected. He did not smoke, he did not drink, and he did not gamble, ride the street cars, or even chew gum. Nothing offered except the discharging of Queenie, and he could not throw the whole burden of housekeeping on Heloise or make such a public confession of poverty. He could reduce future expenditures by further cutting his list of records, but he knew now that he would never be able to buy any of them anyway.

With a sigh, he completed his computations, and realized that he would have to reduce the housekeeping fund by fifty cents a week. He hated to tell Heloise. He even went over the figures to make sure that he had not erred, and he had to pay his bookkeeping the tribute of admitting that it was perfect.

And, as if he hadn't worries enough, there was the matter of getting that privy vault emptied before Leonie came home.

He explained that to Henry O'Donnell, who promised to do his best. But the days passed and there was no sign of the vault cleaners.

"We'll simply have to ask them to keep Leonie another week," Henri told Heloise, his forehead corrugated by worry and distress. "It goes against my grain. Henry offered to keep her as long as she would like to stay, but I said no. If she does stay longer we'll have to insist on paying for her board."

"You'd better let her come home," Heloise said. "She's a grown woman, and nature is nature."

"I'm afraid we can't agree on matters like that."

"There's the bell," Heloise said.

The caller was Miss Julie. As usual, she regarded her visit as a huge joke and was laughing boisterously about it. She plumped herself down into a rocker on the piazza, pushed up her spectacles, and held out a small bag which proved to contain peaches in a high state of ripeness.

"Thank you," Heloise said. "Would you care for one, Cousin Julie?"

Miss Julie selected one, pinched off the brown spots, and proceeded to consume it with the proper hydraulic effects. "It's about time Mrs. Armour should have the glazier put in that window pane," she remarked, gazing diagonally across the street. "It wouldn't cost her but a few cents." She took a last slushy bite of the peach and flung the stone into the yard. "Maybe you'll have a tree," she remarked. "Before I forget it, Henri, I have a message from Henry. He says he's been after them but that they're very busy." And she pointed in the direction of the privy.

"Thank you, Cousin Julie," Henri said. "And tell Henry I'm very grateful to him. Now tell us how you are and all the family. We don't hear a great deal about these things from Leonie."

Miss Julie chuckled. "Young people have a lot more to do than write to their elders," she said. "We're all well, thank God. Of course, I'm not getting any younger but I can still sit up and take nourishment."

"But you hear regularly from Annette?" Heloise asked.

"Annette," said Miss Julie, "is not altogether as considerate of her old mother as she should be. But I don't expect too much of me children. I never did. I'm forever telling Henry that he ought to know by this time that they're not going to do just what he wants."

Henri nodded, as if to say everyone should know that. There was nothing he liked so well as a generalization.

"And that reminds me," said Miss Julie, "I have something to tell you."

Henri sat up straighter.

"Of course Leonie is old enough to be her own mistress," Miss Julie preluded agonizingly. "Let me see when is her birthday?"

October ninth . . . the same day as poor Tante Philippine's. She'd have been over a hundred if she'd lived, think of it. Well, you can't live forever, that's certain."

"What has happened to the child?" Henri demanded.

"It's in the course of nature," Miss Julie said, and Henri closed his eyes and awaited the worst. "As I say, Annette didn't feel that she ought to interfere, except that she was acting, as Henry said, *in loco parentis*. Henry loves Latin words. Of course she didn't ask to see the letters or anything like that, although in my day—"

"What letters?" Henri demanded impatiently.

"Why," said Miss Julie opening her eyes wide, "from that boy, of course."

"What boy?" Heloise inquired.

"Young What's-his-name Calvert," Miss Julie replied. "Eddie's nephew. Lincoln, that's his name. It ought to be easy to remember because it's a calculated affront. A calculated affront," Miss Julie repeated, as if she liked the phrase. "Well, as I was saying, there's a letter from him every day—"

"A letter every day?" Henri demanded. "A letter every day?" He sat back like a man stunned. "Why, that's practically the same as an engagement!"

Miss Julie paid small attention to this outburst.

"Annette felt that she ought to say something to you," she went on, "but she asked me first, and ordinarily, mind you, I'd mind me own business. Keeping me own doorstep clean has always been me guiding rule. But as Henri says, a letter every day shows this business has gone pretty far. And in view of what people are saying—"

"What are they saying?" Henri demanded.

"Susan Williams," Miss Julie said, "is at the bottom of this story that's been going around, about Leonie spending all her Sundays at young Calvert's farm."

Henri looked ready to explode, but Heloise said calmly, "She had our permission."

"Of course," Miss Julie said, "I know that. But they say that she's simply defying you and Heloise and going with this young man you object to and that you had to send her to the country to keep her out of mischief. People have long tongues."

"You can tell them for us," Heloise said, for Henri was by now

bereft of the power of speech, "that it's all nonsense. Leonie has her friends and we don't interfere. Brother and I feel that this young man, as a serious beau, would be a bad choice, but we don't feel that as a mere friend—"

"A mere friend? When he writes a letter every day?" Henri managed to ask. "A mere friend?"

Miss Julie helped herself to another peach.

"Cousin Julie," Henri inquired, his voice husky with agitation, "just what did Annette say about those letters?"

"She said," Miss Julie replied with a wink, "that Leonie told her they were just about farming. A letter every day about farming!" She laughed gleefully. "Heloise, you remember the letters Joe got from that little Fairleigh girl? Sarah found them in his pants pocket and showed them to Henry. He never let anybody see them, but Sarah told me they were something special."

"I don't believe," Henri said stiffly, "that Leonie is receiving any letters of *that* sort. I wouldn't put it past this Calvert scamp to be writing them, but you know very well Leonie would nip anything like that in the bud before you could think twice about it."

"Of course," Miss Julie said. "Of course. Now people will talk no matter what you do. But I don't like this gossip about Leonie. It's not going to do her any good to have people say that this young man is trifling with her."

Having fulfilled her mission, she arose. "I must be getting along," she said. "It's wonderful that people haven't got anything better to do than tell tales. Good-bye, Heloise. Remember me in your prayers." She paused. "You hear any more about that money?"

"Nothing more," Henri said. "It will take a little time."

"I knew it," said Miss Julie. "Anything Eugenie Poiron is in—"

When she had waddled off down the street, muttering to herself, Henri returned to his chair and stared glumly at Heloise.

"A letter every day," he groaned. "And I thought that child was safe."

"No gyrl was ever ruined by letters," Heloise said.

"She'll have to go to Virginia now. That's plain. We can't have people saying that this ruffian has trifled with her affections. A letter a day! I hope she's been ladylike enough not to reply to them."

"I have my doubts," Heloise replied.

"I warned her. I warned her," Henri fretted. "I wanted to keep her up there, but these letters are a bad business. I'd almost rather have her here when the vault cleaners come."

"You can't have everything the way you want it," Heloise said, frankly baffled. "And if you send her to Virginia, what good will that do? Absence only makes the heart grow fonder. That boy will probably write two letters a day when she's that much farther away. Or she might fall in love with some total stranger up there and how would you like that? That's what happened to the Thaxter girl. She went to Boston and fell in love with some Johnny-come-lately named Cabot and they had to make the best of it."

"You don't suppose," Henri said, "that this young man heard that Leonie may come into a fortune and that he's after that?"

But that was too much for Heloise. "I'm sure he's after Leonie's money," she said with a laugh. Then, seeing Henri's hurt look, she became serious again. "Brother, there's one thing you haven't thought of. These infatuations are often over almost as soon as they begin. Why don't you wait a little while and see? I admit this affair seems to be more serious than I thought, but there's no hurry. That boy won't be able to make any plans for marriage for a good while yet."

"I hope," Henri said vehemently, "that his crops freeze, one after another."

"But what about the other farmers? Do you want them to be ruined, too?"

"I shouldn't have said that," Henri admitted. "I think, Sister, we ought to ask Annette to catch those letters before Leonie gets them."

"She's only got a few more days," Heloise said. "What's the use of doing a thing like that? It will just make Leonie mad and more determined than she ever was. No, I don't think that's a good idea at all."

Henri gave in. He swallowed his pride and asked Henry O'Donnell to keep Leonie in the country another week. Whereupon, as might have been expected, the vault cleaners came the next day.

Chapter Nineteen

HENRI'S DISAPPOINTMENT AT his failure to separate Leonie from Lincoln Calvert was extreme, but by the day of her return, an event which always elevated him, he was bullish again. The roofer had done his work, and the plumber had satisfied the city council and the wants of nature without being too expensive. Henri's voice had been in good shape, and he had a cheerful feeling about the Lemay fortune.

Leonie came back plump and healthy, her dark coloring, which enabled her to laugh at parasols, tanned an even deeper shade, so that she looked more like a gypsy than ever.

"Oh, I had a nice time," she said, but that was about all they got without questioning. Yes, she had gone riding. And swimming. They had taken long walks and hayrides and she had been fishing.

"I hope," Henri said with what he considered subtlety, "that you kept in touch with your friends when you were away."

"I had a letter or two," Leonie said carefully, "and I wrote some myself."

"And what did your Cousin Henry say when you spoke to him about the board?" Henri asked by way of a hint.

"Oh, I went through all that rigmarole," Leonie said lightly, "and he told me to keep the money and get some nice things for myself."

Henri started. He had expected the return of nearly all that money.

"Of course I didn't," Leonie said, and Henri breathed more easily. "Naturally, I had to buy a few trifles for the little boys and a present for Betsy and Cousin Annette just to show my appreciation."

"Of course, of course," Henri said.

"I brought back all but about ten dollars, though," Leonie said.

"Well," Henri said insincerely, "you will need some spending money, I suppose. . . ."

"No," Leonie said firmly. "You've spent an awful lot on me and I want you and Auntie to take this and buy something for yourselves."

"Well, don't worry about us knowing what to do with it," Heloise said drily.

"You must visit your Cousin Henry now and tell him what a wonderful thing it was for you to have that three weeks in the mountains," Henri said.

"And Cousin Julie will grumble at me for going to a place where I had to miss Mass for three Sundays," Leonie said.

"Can't you tell her you had a dispensation?" Heloise asked.

"Cousin Julie," Leonie said, "is inclined to take rulings like that into her own hands."

"Of course," Henri said, "she doesn't want to see Cousin Julie because she probably suspects that something has been said about all those letters."

"H'm," Heloise said.

"I suppose that young fellow will be here immediately."

"Probably. Very likely the two of them, if she's said anything to that Newman boy about her return. If he does come, Brother, I do hope you won't persuade him to sing. They just make fun of him, and besides, Leonie and that Calvert boy don't enjoy singing."

"I'll take good care," Henri said stiffly, "not to impose my singing on anyone."

"Don't be too sensitive, Brother. There are lots of people who appreciate your singing, but not young people. It might not be such a bad way to get rid of that Lincoln Calvert at that."

"I don't propose to use my voice deliberately as a nuisance," Henri replied.

At that moment Leonie returned.

"My, you look pretty," Henri said. "Going somewhere?"

"No," Leonie said shortly. "Here's the money I had left."

She handed him the bills and Henri, without looking at them, put them casually into his pocket.

"I wish I could tell you to keep this," he said.

"Well, you can't," Leonie said, perhaps a trifle ungraciously.

"Perhaps there'll be better times. Perhaps you'll marry a rich man," Henri said.

Leonie did not reply, but sailed out of the room.

"I wonder what's the matter with that gyrl?" Henri thought. "She looks worried. Maybe she isn't feeling very well. I think our food doesn't agree with her. We ought to have more chicken and things like that."

There was no visitor that evening, and Leonie went to bed early. It seemed to Henri that her behavior next day was capricious, too, and when no young man appeared he was astonished.

"Maybe," he thought with renewed hope, "they've had a disagreement. Then we won't need to worry about sending her to Virginia after all."

He asked Heloise if she had noticed anything.

"Not any more than you have," Heloise said. "Leonie doesn't take me into her confidence. And I don't see how they could quarrel by mail."

"Well, something has happened."

"You ask her, then. I don't want my head bitten off."

"I can wait," Henri said sagely. "These things always come out in time."

On Friday evening, just as he was turning to his books and papers, the door bell rattled. He heard Leonie open the door, and then the high laugh of Joseph Newman. "He puts too much forward placement into his voice," Henri reflected. "I must tell him about it." He was gratified that the caller was Joseph. A good young man for Leonie. Not too much a polished man of the world, but he might acquire some social grace later. And, with a singer's career ahead of him, he would be in no hurry to get married.

Leonie, too, seemed pleased to have Joseph. She encouraged him to sing, and Henri was asked too. And altogether it was a very satisfactory evening.

Henri was so delighted that he talked quite jubilantly to Heloise later that evening about Leonie's change of interests. "She's showing more interest in singing than in farming," he said.

Heloise looked at him as if wondering whether to nip this new illusion in the bud.

"Brother," she said, "I'm afraid Leonie's very fickle. One week

it's one young man and farming—the next week it's another young man and singing."

"But this young man," Henri said, "is the right sort for Leonie."

Heloise, who had spent a busy day with her mending and economies, did not seem anxious to continue the discussion.

"I'm going up to finish that book Annette brought me," she said. "It's a lovely little story. *Pollyanna*. About a little girl who always looked on the bright side of things."

"I wonder if Leonie has read it," Henri suggested. "It might do her good at that rate."

"Leonie has lofty ideas about books."

"I never could get her interested in Walter Scott," Henri said. "She said it was too heavy."

"That was a long time ago. She's read a good deal at college. I was looking over her books the other day while Queenie and I were dusting. She's got some novels by a man named Thomas Hardy."

"Thomas Hardy? Good God," Henri said, "that's the fellow who wrote that filthy book *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*."

"Well, that's one of the books," Heloise told him.

"I must speak to her about it."

"You'd better not interfere. Leonie's not a child. How often do I have to tell you that?"

"She's still a child to me, and while she's under our roof—"

"That reminds me," Heloise said. "Mr. McHugh sent in his bill today. I forgot to give it to you."

"Don't tell me about it until tomorrow," Henri said. "I'd rather not think about money just now."

Finally Heloise went on upstairs and left him to worry about Leonie's reading. "*Tess of the d'Urbervilles*," he muttered. "Of all books for a child to read . . . It's almost as bad as the time I caught her reading those stories by Oscar Wilde."

He wondered if it might be too late to have a talk with Leonie about the matter, and, as was usual when Henri had a strong desire to do anything, he decided that it was eminently feasible. He trudged up the steps and knocked at the piazza door, which was closed in spite of the heat.

"Yes?" Leonie asked. Her voice sounded muffled.

"May I come in?" Henri asked.

"I'm not dressed, Uncle," Leonie replied. As a singer, Henri

was sensitive to vocal effects, and he noted something very odd about Leonie's voice.

"You're not feeling ill, are you?" he inquired.

"No. Why?"

"Your voice sounds peculiar."

"I've been coughing," Leonie explained. "Something must have got into my throat."

"Take a drink of water."

"I have, and it stopped the cough right away."

"Well, don't stay up too late," Henri said, baffled. "It's not good for you to sit up half the night. Better get some sleep."

"All right, Uncle," Leonie said.

Henri, with fresh material for disturbance in his mind, went into Heloise's room. Heloise, who had naturally heard the entire discussion, looked up from her book.

"Leonie's been coughing," Henri said.

"Oh, leave the child alone," Heloise said with an odd look.

"It's all very well to say leave the child alone. But if she's been coughing that's a serious matter. You know Valerie had weak lungs when she was a child."

"I don't know anything of the kind," Heloise said. "Papa and Mama were always looking for something the matter with Valerie. Because she was spoiled to begin with. She always had too much dessert and sugarplums and she didn't eat her dinner, and they thought she had consumption one minute and something else the next."

"Anyway, if this coughing keeps up, I wish you'd fix her some onion juice and molasses with a little kerosene in it."

"If she coughs any more," Heloise said, looking at him in that odd way again, "I will. Now stop worrying."

Chapter Twenty

THE NEXT DAY being a Saturday, Henri was home early, and he decided to have a talk with Leonie about her reading. He found her propped up on her bed, looking at a magazine. She had been silent at dinner; now he noted that she was pale.

"Leonie," he said, "I've been a bit worried about you."

"There's nothing to worry about," Leonie said.

"You know we have your interest at heart in anything we do," Henri preluded. Leonie looked uncomfortable. "Now, there are certain things that your lack of experience—when you're as old as we are—not fitting—"

"What are you talking about, Uncle?"

"This," Henri said. "Your aunt tells me that you've been reading books by Thomas Hardy. At least, she found them on your shelf."

"What's wrong with that?" Leonie demanded.

"They are not proper reading for a young gyrl."

Leonie let out a long sigh. "What would you like me to read, Uncle? Sir Walter Scott, I suppose."

"I don't like your attitude," Henri said, "and I'd like you to read something a little more edifying than stuff about a lot of English rustics."

"Have you read any of Hardy's novels?" Leonie challenged him.

"I've looked at that Tess book," Henri said, "and it's filth, that's what it is. I should think you'd want to tell your confessor about it."

Leonie regarded him coolly. "I asked Father Dodd over two years ago about reading," she said, "and he told me that a girl in college trying to get an education could read anything she felt was part of her education, within reasonable limits. It seems to me that's permission enough."

Henri was crestfallen. "Well, if Father Dodd said that—" he conceded. "But I still think you might read something better."

Leonie suddenly sat up.

"I'm sick and tired of all this superintending!" she burst out. "Why can't the two of you leave me alone? That's all I want!"

"Why, Leonie—"

"Reading's the only pleasure I've got," Leonie stormed. "There's nothing else to do in this damned dead place."

"Leonie—"

Leonie flung a pillow across the room. It landed squarely against the embroidered sampler exhorting her to honor her father and mother.

"I'm sick of it all!" she wailed. "What is there to do? All the men are on somebody's string already, and I've wasted four years finding out what jackasses most of them are anyway. Now it's too late and I have to put up with Joseph Newman! I'm going to get out. I'll get a job somewhere and live my own life for a while."

Henri was astounded. He had been familiar with Leonie's childish rages, but this outburst of woe was different.

"We've tried to do everything to make you happy," he said sternly. "Everybody makes mistakes. I don't know what ours have been. But you'll be sorry you've talked to me this way."

"Uncle—"

"Don't speak to me!" Henri commanded. "When you've come to your senses, maybe I'll be ready to forgive you for this."

He turned and went out. Being a man of dignity, he felt injured, but he felt sorry for Leonie.

He found Heloise calmly reading.

"Leonie is quite beside herself," he said.

"I heard her. It's disgraceful. I hope you make her understand that she's been very disagreeable."

"It was all because I told her I didn't think Hardy's books were suitable reading. She's dissatisfied and unhappy."

"They are the same thing," Heloise said.

"Maybe if she'd busy herself with something," Henri suggested, "she'd feel better."

"A college education is not the best preparation for a life of sewing and visiting. All she does is read a little and pick at things in the icebox. I suppose she thought she was going to come back and find an entirely new life. Now she seems not to have any friends, and I'm sure she's quarrelled with that young man. I still don't see how they did it by letter."

"She needs an occupation," Henri said.

"A job would probably be the best thing for her."

"No lady in our family has ever worked for a living."

"Well, I wish I had."

"Then there wouldn't have been any proper home for Leonie," Henri pointed out. "Besides, it wouldn't have looked right."

"Oh, looked right," Heloise said. "That's the trouble with us. Worrying how everything will look."

"Well, I'm not going to have it," Henri said flatly. "Leonie will have to get used to our kind of life. And I'm not going to encourage her to make up with that Calvert fellow, if that's what you're hinting at."

"Why don't you go for your walk, Brother?" Heloise inquired. "That will quiet your mind and give Leonie a chance to think over her bad behavior."

"It's not our fault if she doesn't find a dozen young men to run after her," Henri said, still hoping for sympathy.

"It doesn't matter whose fault it is. We get the blame. What did you expect? You began to spoil the child the instant she came into the house and now you expect her to be an angel."

Leonie continued to sulk. She went walking Sunday morning, and in the afternoon she shut herself in her room and read. Henri did not address her, although it hurt him to give her this silent treatment, and she did not speak to him. But she was not ill-natured and Monday evening she made peace with her uncle.

"Uncle," she said, "I'm sorry I was unpleasant."

Henri was embarrassed. He patted her shoulder. "Never mind, never mind," he said. "I knew you didn't mean it."

"I was nasty," Leonie said.

"Never mind, never mind."

"I'm going to be like Auntie and you and make the best of things as they are."

"That's my good little girl," Henri said.

Leonie evidently had meant what she said, for that evening the old house was alive. Leonie and Joseph Newman and another couple were on the piazza, laughing and apparently having the best of times. It was a bit distracting, but Henri rejoiced in it. After a discreet time he went out to say good-evening to the young people, a

boy named Rodgers whom he knew and a pretty girl in a summer dress and white shoes to whom Leonie introduced him. Henri welcomed them, pontificated briefly, and went up to Heloise's room.

"Very different from the last few days, eh?"

"Very," Heloise said.

"Young Rodgers I know," Henri said. "His father is cashier at Bettenkamp's. But who is this Callaghan child? I don't know them."

"They probably don't spring from the nobility," Heloise replied. "Now don't go worrying about the family trees of Leonie's friends."

"She ought to remember who we are, though."

"Stop trying to turn Leonie into a snob. There are enough of them around."

"I only want her to use judgment in choosing her friends," Henri argued obstinately.

"Nothing the child does ever pleases you," Heloise said. "Now you go back to your books before I get mad myself."

Henri returned to his notes on the Lemay family. He wished Heloise would have a little more sense of social fitness.

"Sho, I kin teach her to swim good," he heard Joseph Newman saying confidently. "First I teach her to float—"

Henri did not catch what was said next, but it was followed by laughter, and he cocked his ears. He suspected that the conversation was becoming unseemly, but all he could find out was that a picnic was being planned.

"We could ask them," Leonie said, "that would make eight."

Henri charged upstairs again.

"What's the matter now? Have you been bitten by another rat?" Heloise inquired.

"They are planning a picnic at the Isle of Palms—"

"Good," Heloise said. "I could enjoy one myself."

"I want you to put your foot down," Henri told her, "and insist on a chaperone."

"Are they going to stay overnight?"

"I don't see what difference that makes."

"How did you find all this out? I thought you were busy on your affairs."

"I can't help hearing when they talk so loud. I tell you I don't like this business. They were talking about teaching Leonie to swim,

and that young Newman said of course he would have to hold her in the water, and then they laughed at something else—I couldn't hear what. If there are going to be doings like that, a chaperone is absolutely necessary."

"Well, I veto the idea here and now. You'll put an end to this picnic if you insist on having old people around and making everybody uncomfortable."

"Sister," Henri said, "I don't understand you."

But Heloise was in one of her ruthless moods. "Go back downstairs," she said. "You may be missing something."

"We talkin' about a picnic on the Isle of Pa'ms," Joseph informed him.

"That so?" Henri replied. "The undertow is very strong there, sometimes."

"Not where we goin'," Joseph said. "Besides, I kin pull any of 'em out of trouble. You needn't to worry, Mr. Lemay."

"Leonie," Henri asked, "what happened to that pair of waterwings you used to wear in bathing?"

"They rotted away long ago," Leonie said. "Besides, I'm not that bad at swimming."

"I'll take care of Leonie, suh," Joseph assured him, and Miss Callaghan laughed softly.

"Joe's really a wonderful swimmer, Mr. Lemay," said young Rodgers.

Henri was of the opinion that it was the wonderful swimmers who drowned, but he did not say so. He did not mention the need of a chaperone, either. Not even to Leonie. On the whole, he was pleased with her having Joseph Newman for a friend. A nice boy with good ideas. And anything, within reason, was better than having that young Calvert blagyard on the doorstep.

He communicated his approval of Joseph to Heloise.

"Everyone to his taste," Heloise said. "I only wish his company made her seem happier afterwards, that's all."

But next day Henri heard something that troubled him.

"That young Calvert," said Mrs. Emmons, as they were working away, "is taking on something terrible, they say."

"Young Calvert?" Henri inquired, being deep in figures at the moment.

"Lincoln Calvert," Mrs. Emmons supplemented. "His uncle told me the boy was moping something awful." She looked sidewise at Henri. "I heard he was very much interested in your niece," she said.

Mrs. Emmons hammered away at the typewriter for a moment, lunged for the eraser, and made a vigorous correction. She blew the rubbings away and went on. "What I was saying, though, is that Lincoln Calvert seems to be hard hit. Would you object to the match, Mr. Lemay?"

"I haven't heard anything about any match," Henri said stiffly. It seemed impossible to repress Mrs. Emmons.

"I mean, if Lincoln Calvert turned out to be serious about your niece, would you oppose it?"

"I think it's a little early to talk about matches, don't you?" Henri parried. "The young man has been to see my niece a few times and that's all."

"People say," said Mrs. Emmons, "that they went everywhere together."

"I don't know that that's the case," Henri said. "If you don't mind, Mrs. Emmons, I'd rather not discuss these personal affairs of my niece's."

Mrs. Emmons accepted the snub in perfect good-humor. "Well, all right," she said, and from that moment on was perfectly convinced that all she had heard was true.

Chapter Twenty-One

IT WAS A shock to Henri to find that the picnic was scheduled for that Sunday. He wanted more time to brood over those promised instructions in floating. Sometimes young men were carried away when they had girls in such situations.

He did not like to come right out and caution Leonie about such matters, but he gave her plenty of other warnings—not to eat too heavily of breakfast and not to stay too long in the sun. “And you be careful of that undertow,” he added. “Never mind what Joseph Newman says. That won’t help when you are already being carried down. And don’t go in right after you’ve had your lunch. You might get cramps.”

“You aren’t afraid the *Sappho* will sink, are you, Uncle?” Leonie teased him. “I’ll put on my lifebelt.”

Henri retired somewhat huffily to the piazza to read the paper, but he didn’t get much comfort from that. War, war, war. The world was going to the devil, that was the trouble.

He watched Leonie go out of the door as if he never expected to see her again.

Leonie, however, was afraid only of being bored. She found the others gathered on the wharf, and in high spirits as they boarded the ancient, ill-smelling ferryboat, but before long she found them all silly and tiresome, and began to wish herself at home.

On the trolley an old lady scolded the motorman roundly for taking her past her station, and other Charleston oddities came to mind—the old soul who hauled her groceries up on a rope, the ancient colored man who led every funeral, and the fisherman who was afraid his friends would know that he could read and turned his newspaper upside down when any of his acquaintances approached.

“There are lots of things like that in Charleston,” Leonie said, “but not very much to do.”

She was surprised at the eager way everyone agreed.

"I'm going away," Paul Rodgers said. "I'm going out West. Or at least to New Orleans."

"That's how I feel," said Vincent Dowd.

"I'd like to get away too," Frank McHugh said, "but the old man wants me to keep up the roofing business. He says people will always need roofs."

"If I decide to be a singer," Joseph said, "there ain't nothin' to do here. You got to be in New York or Philadelphia."

The girls were no less dissatisfied. Catherine Bennett said she wished she could break away. Her family were from out of town and Charleston people were clannish. She said they made her sick, sometimes. Mary Callaghan said the city was no place for Irish Catholics. Only Frieda Weber didn't seem greatly to care.

"I never could understand why Lincoln Calvert wanted to come back," Rodgers said. "He had a chance to farm up in Pennsylvania, but here he is again. You know him, don't you, Leonie?"

"Oh, yes," Leonie said lightly. "We went to private school together."

"They said Lincoln was stuck on one of those Jenkinson girls in the Battery," Catherine said. "They've got money. Maybe that's why he came back."

Leonie resisted the urge to deny this.

"Lincoln was always a wild kid," Paul Rodgers said. "He was always doing something crazy." He looked as if he might tell a good deal more if there hadn't been girls present.

"Any one of the Garrison girls would be a good catch for him," said Catherine. "There's four of them, with money and everything, and all single."

"Maybe they don't want to get married," said Mary.

"Everybody," Catherine said, "wants to get married."

"Well, now, you take Leonie," Joseph said, with the air of presenting a rare specimen. "She want to *do* something, like have a career."

Leonie resented their look of astonishment. "I don't see anything funny about that," she said loftily. "Lots of women are doing things in the world nowadays."

"You mean like being an actress?" McHugh asked.

"A suffragette," Mary suggested and they all roared at the very

idea of the mannishly dressed ladies who marched through the streets with banners.

"I don't really know what I want to do," Leonie said. "I don't know if I have any talent. I can't paint, and I can't play the piano, but maybe I could write. I want to do something."

"You've come home with big ideas from college," Catherine said flatly.

Leonie reddened but she did not argue. "Anyway, that's the way I feel about it," she said.

"Nobody from Charleston was ever a writer," McHugh said, with that manner Leonie hated, demonstrating that no one from home could ever do anything.

"Besides, there's nothing ever happens in Charleston to write about," Catherine said. "It's the *deadest* place. . . ."

Leonie was relieved when the car stopped at the terminal.

"The cabin about half a mile," Joseph said. "The gyrls kin put on they bathing suits first and then we go in and change ours."

"It's thoughtful of you to make that arrangement, Joe," Leonie said. "I was afraid you might want us all to change together."

The other girls shrieked appreciation of this daring joke. Joseph did not take it too well. He looked at Leonie with a puzzled smile.

"Don't let your uncle hear you say anything like that," he admonished her seriously. "I promise him to take good care of you."

The bathers were already out in force, and the fishermen and picnickers. There was a brisk breeze, and the sun gleamed on the broad white beach. Behind them the unused Ferris wheel, remnant of a more optimistic time, loomed out of the sand. Far up the beach a group of turkey buzzards were intent upon some carcass that had floated ashore, and the tide, just half way in, had not yet covered the luckless king crabs and jellyfish stranded during the night. Joseph picked up a sand dollar and flung it sharply into the surf, making it ricochet.

He walked along beside Leonie, expatiating on the various forms of crustaceans whose shells had been rolled up and down by years and years of the tide. He picked up a tiny white shell, completely perforated, and explained to Leonie how the enemies of that particular kind of animal had pierced its armor.

"You do know a lot about things like that," Leonie said.

"I always tries to find out something," Joseph said, "even when I

out for pleasure. . . . A lot o' people don't think I'm bright," he added, "but they's a lot o' things I know that they don't."

"Oh, I don't think anyone could be so mean as to say you weren't bright, Joe," Leonie said.

"That's nice of you, Leonie," Joseph said, looking at her with eyes full of devotion.

The girls got hurriedly into their ample swimming dresses and black stockings and yielded the cabin to the young men, who were soon ready.

"Now we git in a good swim," Joseph said, "and I teach Leonie how to float." He stood there in an attitude of protection, and Leonie had to admit that his appearance was impressive. In a bathing suit Joseph lost some of the shambling appearance he had in street clothes. His angularity remained, but the great muscles of his shoulders and legs, the straightness of his back, and the size of his arms could not be ignored.

"I'm going in for a little swim first," Leonie said, looking after the others, who had already made for the water. "You go ahead and have yours. Then you can teach me to float, if you think you can teach me."

They swam in the mild water until they were tired and hungry and then seized upon the lunch boxes. The men lighted cigarettes, all except Joseph, who explained with patient pride that his abstinence was for the sake of his voice, and Catherine lighted one too and smoked it with an air of bravado.

When this sensation had been given its due notice, they spoke of fishing, baseball, the imminent opening of the Panama Canal, and of the news of the war in Europe.

The Irish members of the party were strongly pro-German, and insisted that the Kaiser had had no choice except to declare war.

"Anyway," Frank McHugh said, "it will be over in a few weeks. That German war machine—man, it will be just like a steam roller going through a lot of marsh grass."

"I'm glad it hasn't got anything to do with us," Paul Rodgers said. "I had two years at the Cit'del and that's all the war I want anything to do with."

"I hear 'em say," Joseph contributed, "that the fertilizer business gointa have trouble. Can't git the chemicals they needs from Germany."

Leonie thought of Lincoln Calvert's diatribes against the land ruined by cotton and corn, and the need of a system of farming which would keep the soil fertile year after year, the way it was in European countries, and suddenly wished that she had not been so quick to take offense. She missed his easy conversation and his ideas and his air of being interested in hers.

Joseph got up and stretched. "I feel like another swim," he announced. "Leonie, want to try them floatin' lessons now?"

Leonie shook off the sand which half-covered her and stood up.

"All right," she said. "Now, don't you duck me, Joe."

But Joseph had no such playful intentions. "River water better for teachin' people to float," he said seriously. "This surf move too much. But we gointa do the best we kin. Now you jist loosen up, Leonie, and lay down een de water. Jist let go. I'll ketch you if you starts to sink."

Leonie tried her best, but each time she became tense and commenced to sink. Joseph's arms were under her. She could feel the power in his lift, even under the water.

"I can't," she protested.

"Anybody kin do it," Joseph insisted patiently. "You try again, now. All right, loosen up."

"The word is relax," Leonie said.

"All right," Joseph said. "Call 'em whatever you like."

Leonie made another attempt, and this time a breaker caught her. She felt herself going under; she shrieked and gasped, and found herself clinging to Joseph, who had her in his arms as if she were a baby. She was clutching his arm, and even in her startled state she was aware of his muscularity. "It's like the limb of a tree," she thought.

"You sure are a little thing, Leonie," Joseph said.

Leonie slid down to a standing position.

"That's enough for a while," Joseph said. "All you need now is to feel sure you kin do it. We kin walk along the beach a little and you kin git your breath back."

He strolled beside her, idly kicking the shallow water and apparently deep in thought. He did not speak until they were a couple of hundred yards away from the others.

"Leonie," he said. "I sure feel happy out here with you."

Leonie drew a sharp breath. She had hoped that this wouldn't happen.

"I guess I must be in love," Joseph said, haltingly, and turning a beet red. "You ever been in love, Leonie?"

"I don't really know," Leonie said. "I guess not."

"I wish you could feel that way about me," Joseph said. "I don't have to be a singer, you know. I could give that up and git a job and be successful—"

"Joe," Leonie said, "I'm sorry, but I don't feel that way about you. You're a nice fellow, but—"

The simple big man looked crushed.

"Maybe you'll change your mind," he said.

"No, I won't, Joe. You'd better give up right away."

"Kin I still come to see you?" Joseph pleaded. "I won't count on nothin', Leonie. I'll be satisfied if I kin jist come and talk with you once in a while. I won't come very often, either, if you don't want me to."

"Of course you can come to see me," Leonie said warmly. "And my uncle will be very disappointed if you don't, too. Only no more talk about being in love and giving up your singing. Don't do that for any girl. You don't want to be another Charleston nonentity, working for eighteen dollars a week the rest of your life, do you?"

"No, I don't," Joseph admitted.

"Use some sense," Leonie said, "and don't let this old place drag you down. Go away to some other part of the country where you'll have a chance. Nobody in Charleston has any imagination. Come on, now, let's get back with the others."

Joseph, completely silent now, plodded beside her. She felt terribly sorry for him. She had never been obliged to do this to any young man before. Of course there had been boys who had to be discouraged from asking for kisses and that sort of thing. But this day represented a kind of milestone for Leonie. She didn't like the experience—and yet she knew that if a girl were really popular she might have to repeat it a good many times.

"Joe," she said, just to give him a little more comfort, "there are lots of girls. Lots more than men."

Joseph didn't seem to be impressed with her view of things. He was too good-natured to impose his depressed mood on the others, but once, when they were on the decrepit ferryboat, Leonie saw him

staring into the distance and thought she detected a tear in his eye.

She was glad to part from them all. They were friendly and she had known them ever since her childhood, but they had nothing whatever to share with her. In a sense different from her uncle's and based on experience rather than on a false sense of family standing, she felt that they were beneath her.

As she neared the house, she put on a cheerful face. By the way Henri flung open the door the instant she approached, she knew that he had been pacing up and down on the piazza, waiting to be sure that she was safe and sound. She put her arms around him and gave him a kiss.

"Now you can stop worrying, Uncle," she said gaily. "Here I am, as good as new."

Chapter Twenty-Two

HENRI WAS PLEASED to see Joseph Newman again the following Wednesday. Leonie wasn't. She had wanted, that day at the beach, to be kind, but as the days passed she knew that she had let herself in for another session of pleading, sooner or later. Joseph wasn't the kind to give up hope easily.

He had brought her a box of candy and two delicate and intricate shells from his collection. He talked about the picnic and his singing career, but he looked woebegone and he was less interesting than ever. She was tremendously relieved when he consulted his bulky Ingersoll and decided it was time to go.

He appeared again on Friday evening and asked Leonie if she would like to attend the band concert with him Sunday afternoon.

"Thanks, but I don't believe I would," Leonie said, and then she added, a little cruelly, "I don't take much interest in music."

Bitter disillusionment showed in Joseph's unprotected face. "No?" he inquired. "That's too bad, Leonie. I don't see how anybody kin git along without music."

"I guess I've just had a bit too much of it," Leonie said. "I've lived with a singer ever since I was three."

She could see that Joseph was weighing the chances of happiness with a woman who did not care for music.

"Well, Leonie," he said after a pause, "that would make me kind of a nuisance, I guess."

"I didn't mean anything like that," Leonie assured him, but she hoped he would take the hint.

"Tell you what," Joseph said, "I'll be very careful not to talk about singin' around you. I wouldn't want you to be bored."

Leonie couldn't think of a tactful reply.

"I'd like to do whatever you like," Joseph said devotedly. "Anything that interests you, that's the thing I'll take an interest in."

Leonie sighed. "I'm not much interested in anything," she said.

"I just feel bored with the world. I haven't got anything I want to do and—"

"Oh, everybody feel that way now and then," Joseph assured her with healthy optimism. "Maybe it's the hot weather."

"No, it isn't," Leonie said. "The heat has nothing to do with it. It's just that life isn't worth living."

"Leonie," Joseph said earnestly, "I'll do anything I kin to make you happy. You jist tell me what it is."

"There's nothing you can do," Leonie answered. She wanted to say "except not coming to see me again," but she hadn't the heart.

Joseph sat doggedly on until ten o'clock.

"When kin I come again?" he asked. "I don't want to wear out my welcome, you know."

Leonie hesitated. "Next Friday?"

Joseph plainly showed his disappointment. "Oh, Leonie, Friday a long way off. Couldn't I come Wednesday?"

"Oh, all right, Wednesday," Leonie agreed.

The news of the German invasion of Belgium shook Henri out of his indifference to world affairs, and he spent the breakfast period comparing it to the invasion of South Carolina. Heloise did not seem tremendously impressed by the fate of Belgium.

"It's too bad," she said, "but I've got too many troubles of my own to worry about Europe."

Reflecting that women were incurably narrow in their views, Henri set off for work. Since both of them were punctual in their habits, it was not surprising that he and Colonel Beecham met.

"Terrible news," said the Colonel after they had exchanged greetings. "Terrible news."

"It reminds me of the War," Henri said.

"History repeats itself," said the Colonel, looking around at houses he and Henri could remember in a state of dilapidation after the bombardment. "In more ways than one. That fellow Calvert is pro-German. I expected it. But it makes me mad all the same."

Henri nodded.

"I'd like to give him a piece of my mind," said the Colonel, his usually mild eyes blazing, "and I tell you right here and now that I would. Except for the unfortunate fact that I haven't spoken to the fellow in fifty-three years and I'm not going to begin now."

Henri agreed that this made reproof insuperably difficult.

"By the way," Colonel Beecham said, cooling off a bit, "I heard from Miss Julie Gerard that you have some interest in a legacy left by one of your French relatives. You had better see that something is done promptly. I'm afraid this war will tie up any French funds of that sort."

"I'll do that, Colonel," Henri said. "Thank you."

They parted, and Henri, disturbed, wondered if he ought to indulge in the extravagance of sending a telegram to Cousin Eugenie Poiron. After considerable silent debate, he did so. That left him exactly fifteen cents in his pocket, and the fear that Cousin Eugenie might take it into her head to send a reply collect.

But Cousin Eugenie spared him this difficulty. He had a letter from her in the Wednesday morning mail. The Colonel had been right. The New York lawyers had informed her that it was impossible to go any further until normal conditions were restored.

He passed the letter to Heloise. "Well, Brother," she said, "I know this is a great disappointment to you but I never expected any better. I notice she doesn't say anything about returning all that money you sent her."

"Why of course they can't return the money," Henri said.

"You take my advice and don't put another red cent into this."

"You talk as if the money had been thrown away," Henri said pettishly. "Why, this is only a delay. The war will be over soon and then they'll be able to go ahead."

But Henri was bitterly disappointed and on his way to work he avoided Colonel Beecham, who, he could not help feeling, was somewhat responsible for this turn in his affairs. And he did not listen to Mrs. Emmons. He did not want to hear anything about old Calvert: pro-Germans were not to his taste that morning.

"Young gentleman to see you, Mr. Lemay," William said, with the air of repeating a statement.

"See me? Oh, certainly, certainly," Henri said, laying down his pen. "Say I'll be right out, William."

He adjusted his coat and went down into the store, where Joseph Newman was pacing up and down in his queer shambling fashion. Henri's heart sank.

"Good-mornin', suh," Joseph said.

"Good-morning, Joseph," Henri responded. "And what can I do for you, my boy?"

"I have to go on a errand on Broad Street," Joseph explained, "so I take time to come in hyuh to see you, Mr. Lemay." He burst out, suddenly looking very miserable, "Kin we talk private, suh? Something I want to ask you about."

"There's no privacy in this store," Henri said. "The only place we can talk in peace is out in front."

He led the young man out to the blazing light of East Bay and they stood before the window.

"Mister Lemay," Joseph said, "Leonie ain't treatin' me right."

Henri cleared his throat in embarrassment. "What's the trouble?" he inquired.

"She tell me not to come to see her this week," Joseph said. "I wonder if you know anything I might do."

"Leonie is only a gyirl," Henri said, "and gyirls do things like that without thinking about it. Why don't you wait and see what happens?"

"For six weeks," Joseph said wretchedly, "I been comin' to see her and tryin' to please her and now all of a sudden she say she won't see me. I feel all broke up inside, suh. I can't even sing, I feels so bad."

"I know. It affects the diaphragm," Henri said, ever ready to theorize about his hobby. "I'd wait until this blows over, if I were you. It's bad for a voice to use it while you're upset. It will come back when you feel better."

"Yes, suh," Joseph said, "but how that gointa help me with Leonie?"

"True, true," Henri admitted. "I suppose it won't."

"I don't even feel interested in singing," Joseph said. His misery, like his joints, stuck out all over him.

"My boy," Henri said, "I'm sorry, but there's nothing I can do about it. Nothing at all. I have no control over my niece's feelings. Since you're asking my advice, I'll tell you what I think. I'd find another young lady. Has Leonie—" he hesitated. "Has Leonie—er—encouraged you?"

"No suh. But I never pays too much attention to discouragement. Now I can't even keep on trying."

"You find another gyirl, son," Henri said.

"That ain't so easy," Joseph objected. "I never was much good around gyrls, Mr. Lemay. They treats me all right until somebody else come along and then they just leaves me alone."

"Joseph," Henri said, "maybe the right gyrl hasn't come along. You're only twenty-one, aren't you? Why don't you be patient?"

"There's only one gyrl for me," Joseph said doggedly. "Maybe I'll go to war. I might be lucky enough to git kill. I kin join the British Army."

"Oh, don't talk like that," Henri said quickly.

Joseph blinked.

"I gos to do something to forget all this," he said miserably.

"You get busy at something and make a lot of money," Henri said. "Then you'll be able to look around. My niece is a very lovely young woman but there are other pretty young women. You just don't see them now, that's all."

Joseph didn't look comforted. "That Calvert fellow," he said, "he got Leonie all upset."

"You're wrong about that, Joseph," Henri told him. "She hasn't seen him since the day before she left for the country."

Joseph shook his head, and then, suddenly, stuck out his hand, said, "Thank you, suh," and hurried off.

"Poor fellow," Henri murmured, "he isn't the husband I'd choose for Leonie, but I do feel sorry for him. All that talk about going for a soldier to forget his troubles."

He went back to his desk, and every now and then, thinking about poor Joseph, he sighed. It was ridiculous, this young love, but the boy tugged at his sympathies.

"Thank God he was wrong when he said that Calvert ruffian had anything to do with Leonie's behavior," he reflected. "I've got troubles enough without the nephew of a pro-German Unionist nigger-lover trying to corrupt my niece."

Some time passed before the poison in Joseph's remark took effect. Suddenly, however, it did, and as the venom penetrated his veins, Henri let out a loud exclamation of anger and amazement.

"What's the trouble, Mr. Lemay?" Mrs. Emmons inquired, her smooth plump face suddenly full of concern.

Henri recovered himself. "Just a twinge," he explained. "My old sciatica."

"My uncle had that," Mrs. Emmons recollected. "He used to get perfectly savage when the pain hit him."

Henri saw it all now. That infernal boy had made it up with Leonie, and she had immediately cast off poor Joseph Newman. It was just like a Calvert. Hadn't that Colonel, as they called him, been trying for years—vainly, of course—to steal Antoinette from him?

It was a double blow. Not only was Leonie in danger again, but he, Henri, had lost the friendship of a fellow-hobbyist. It had been nice to think, once in a while, that he could perhaps take some small part in shaping Joseph's career. ("Mr. Henri Lemay teach me all I really know about singing.")

When he saw Leonie's face at the dinner table, he knew that Joseph had been right. "She must have known this yesterday, at the latest," he thought. "How was it that I didn't notice?"

He realized that Heloise was speaking to him.

"Was it very hot in the office today?"

"Hot?" Henri inquired. "Oh, the weather. Yes, very hot."

"Brother, I hope that legacy business isn't worrying you too much."

"No," Henri said sharply. He was trying to think just what to say to Leonie.

"Joseph Newman came to see me this morning," he said finally, giving her an accusing look.

Leonie was startled. She gazed at her plate.

"He was a pitiful object," Henri said. "You've hurt his feelings by telling him not to come here any more."

"I can't have him tagging around," Leonie said. "He's too tiresome, and he wants to tell me that he's in love with me. I've got no other protection against that kind of nagging but to get rid of him."

"Leonie," Heloise said, "you've been very unfair. You let that young man come around and plan that picnic for you and all that, and now you show him plainly that you were just using him to make that other boy see you didn't care."

"I didn't—" Leonie began, but she stopped.

"And now, I suppose," Henri said, "that young blagyard is coming here tonight?"

"He asked if he could," Leonie said. She looked triumphant. "Don't think I asked him to come," she said.

"I'm sure the quarrel was over something very important," Heloise remarked.

"He was rude to me. He said he would be too busy to see me the first week after I came back from the mountains, and I wrote to him and told him that if he felt that way he could go attend to his affairs and not worry about me. I wasn't going to let him think I cared. And that made him mad, I guess, and he didn't answer and he hasn't been here." She pouted. "But he ate humble pie."

"It seems to me that this affair has gone pretty far when you take offense at a little thing like that," Heloise said.

"As your gyardians," Henri added, "we have some right to know just what—"

Leonie flushed angrily. "There hasn't been any spooning, if that's what you mean," she said.

"That doesn't answer the question," Henri persisted. "You can't have young men coming around here, I'm sure, without knowing something of what they mean by it."

"You didn't ask all these questions about Joseph Newman," Leonie said.

"That's very different. Joseph is a harmless sort of boy. This Calvert is a gambler and a rake—"

"I don't think you have any right to say things like that about people when you just make them up out of your head."

"Leonie," Heloise said, "we want to impress one thing upon you. Supposing that this Calvert boy is serious, have you ever thought about mixed marriages? We are not narrow-minded, I hope, but putting our feelings aside, how do you think the Calverts will feel about having a Catholic marry into the family?"

"There's nobody but old Colonel Calvert," Leonie said, "and I'm sure he won't object to us."

"Object?" Henri barked. "I like his cheek, objecting. I—"

"Please let me do the talking, Brother," Heloise said. "Leonie, there are lots of Calverts. Those cousins on Legare Street, for instance. Do you want them to look down on you? That's the way Protestants are. They will make this young man miserable over getting married in the Church, and promising to bring up your children as Catholics—"

"Sister," Henri said, "I don't think we need to be indelicate. All this is beside the point. The real point is that this young man is a

member of a discredited family. Don't talk about his family looking down on *us*. His father was a Unionist, and his uncle still is and pro-German besides. That's the kind of people they are. Some of them were even Loyalists in the Revolution."

"Isn't it time to forget all that?" Leonie demanded.

"You don't know what it was like," Henri said, "or you wouldn't talk so lightly about forgetting it. The Yankees ruined our entire way of life. And if you could have witnessed the struggle we had to win back our supremacy in this state, when Wade Hampton—"

"Uncle," Leonie said, "don't tell me again about the Red Shirts. I suppose Colonel Calvert held out against that, too."

"He said it was a mob movement," Henri told her, "and that he didn't care to have a part in it. He said he would assist in keeping law and order if needed. That's the kind of man he is."

"It does seem to me," Heloise interrupted, "that we're getting away from the subject a little."

"What is there to say about it?" Leonie asked. "You and Uncle object to Lincoln on the grounds that he's a Protestant and that his family have always done what they thought was right instead of following everybody else like a lot of sheep."

Whenever the Irish Hughes blood came out in Leonie, Henri could only splutter. He spluttered now.

"I've forbidden that ruffian to come into this house once before. I've got a good mind to do it again."

"If you do—" Leonie began, but Heloise interrupted.

"We aren't going to do anything of the kind. Your uncle is just upset. We're going to trust your good sense not to get too deeply involved with this Lincoln Calvert. You're putting yourself in the way of trouble and heartburnings."

"Uncle is a great one to talk," Leonie said. "He's been going with Miss Antoinette for about a hundred years, and she's a Protestant. And an aristocrat," she added scornfully. "Wouldn't the Fieldings have looked down on us?"

"There is no need to drag Antoinette into this," Henri said stiffly.

"Did she promise to bring up your children Catholics?" Leonie demanded.

"We never discussed such a thing," Henri said. "It would have been improper."

"Then how would you have ever found out?"

"Some suitable third person would have made the necessary representations," Henri said.

"Well, now, let's don't cross our bridges until we come to them," Heloise urged. "There's no need to discuss religious arrangements yet, I hope."

"Of course not," Henri said. "We're all talking foolishness, anyway." He laughed as if all this conversation had been merely the rehearsal of a play. "Leonie couldn't think of doing such a foolish thing as—well, we know our little girl isn't going to do anything she'll regret."

That evening he made a valiant attempt not to pay any attention to Lincoln Calvert's visit. He did not mention it to Leonie, and sitting at his papers he hummed under his breath to be sure that he heard nothing.

But he was worried. He tossed restlessly that night, his thoughts going around in circles like the giant mosquito which had somehow forced entry into his canopy, and he dreamed uneasily of a host of little grand-nephews, each of whom had a precise goatee, wore an Ascot tie, and looked in every respect like Colonel Calvert as they danced around singing "Marching Through Georgia" just to plague him. He awoke dull and listless, and even Sal Hepatica didn't help.

Chapter Twenty-Three

SINCE HE HAD not acquainted his cousin Julie with the news about the legacy, Henri decided to visit her that Sunday after Mass.

He followed her home, at a discreet distance, for he was in no mood to talk with her on the street if he could avoid that. He found the pace distressingly slow; Miss Julie not only walked as if she were in a procession, but she also stopped frequently to look at gardens, small details in the arrangement of piazza furniture, or the raising and lowering of windows—in fact, whatever happened to pique her active curiosity.

“She’s just like a dog,” Henri fumed, and if he hadn’t been constitutionally unable to change his mind about any intention he would have abandoned the visit.

His patience was still more sorely tried when the old lady plumped down on one of the green-painted benches on the Pond, and he was obliged to do the same.

By his watch, it required exactly thirty minutes for Miss Julie to cover the distance from the Cathedral to the big house on Ashley Avenue.

From a block away, he heard her slam the front door just short of smashing the glass panels. A few moments afterward he rang the bell.

Sarah answered, and he went onto the cool piazza and sat in a rocker and waited. He heard Sarah, upstairs, announcing his arrival, and Miss Julie’s familiar bellow, this time to the effect that she had to take off her corset and cool herself, and Sarah returned with a barely suppressed grin and asked him to wait, and would he have a drink of water?

“Thank you, Sarah,” Henri said. “I would like a glass of water.” When she brought it he asked about her husband, and was told that he was so-so, after which Sarah returned to her cooking.

“The amount of food they waste would keep us for a week,” Henri

said to himself, surveying the well-kept garden, the laden fig trees, and sniffing the enticing aroma of the pie Sarah was baking. "All this work for one person—well, no, for four because of course there's Sarah and Stephens and Henry O'Donnell, in addition to Cousin Julie."

His thoughts were broken in upon by the arrival of Miss Julie.

"Henri!" she boomed. "So glad to see you! I wish we could have walked home together."

"I stayed and talked to some friends," Henri explained.

"I thought Father Schmidt's sermon was wonderful," Miss Julie said. "Of course I couldn't hear every word, because the acoustics are so bad at the Cathedral, but what I heard was very edifying, very."

"Yes, indeed," Henri agreed. "But tell me how you are, Cousin Julie."

"Well," Miss Julie said philosophically, "I'm seventy-four, son, and I've got no cause to complain. My liver gets torpid every now and then and Dr. Forbes says me blood pressure is high, but that don't worry me. Sister Josephine, when she was here for poor Tessie's funeral, tried to get me to drink hot water every morning but it makes me gorge rise. Now there's Sister Emma—that's what worries me. Emma has too big an appetite. She always had, too. I remember once when we were gyirls and she ate forty sugar figs without stopping. We used to say she had a tapeworm, like poor Cousin Clara's boy Theodore. He was a little devil. Once—"

But Henri, who emphatically did not want to hear the story of Teddy's tapeworm, made so bold as to interrupt. He wanted, after all, to discuss the legacy.

"H'm, h'm. Very funny," he rumbled. "And all are well up in the country?"

"All I hear about is Annette's quarrel with the landlady," said Miss Julie, seizing on a grievance. "She gives the children skim milk—blue johnnie, we always called it—and Annette is having a duck fit. It doesn't do any good for me to ask how George's poison oak is this summer, or if Betsy has the cramps every m—I mean, if Betsy has the cramps now and then," she amended. "Letting that gyirl go riding and diving in that lake up there when she's just getting used to being a woman. I don't know what Annette can be thinking of, I declare." The old lady shook herself indignantly. "And I don't

know how they can be well with that country food. Those little flat biscuits I wouldn't throw at the cat, and gummy rice."

Henri was inclined to discount Miss Julie's criticisms. He thought it would be very agreeable to have such a vacation as the O'Donnells had every summer.

"Leonie had a wonderful time there," he remarked.

"Anything for a change when you're that age," said Miss Julie disparagingly. "I suppose it was quite a treat for Leonie."

Henri flushed, but did not retort.

"I'm a little worried about Leonie," he said.

Miss Julie's eyes brightened. This gave her a chance to hand out a few prescriptions.

"That child is too thin," she said. "There's no more meat on her than there is on a rice bird. Poor Valerie was the same way, I remember. What flesh she had," Miss Julie added, "was all on her backside."

Ignoring this coarse observation, Henri said that Leonie seemed to have a fairly good appetite.

"Well, she don't show it," Miss Julie said. "Running around at such a rate, it's no wonder she wears herself down to skin and bones. And from what I hear Leonie keeps on the go a good deal."

"Oh, gyrls have a lot of little things to do," Henri said.

Miss Julie looked at him significantly. "She don't wear herself out running to church, though," she remarked.

"Leonie is not especially pious."

"You tell her," Miss Julie said with emphasis, "not to forget God. I've never been a person to fiddle with other people's salvation, but I can't help thinking of the immortal souls of me own family."

She rummaged in the capacious pocket of her apron and fetched out a peanut which she proceeded to munch.

"I always feel a bit faint when it comes near to dinnertime," she said. "Well, speaking of Leonie, I think what she needs is a good tonic. Pepto-Mangan or Beef, Iron and Wine would just suit her."

Henri tried once more to carry out the purpose of his visit.

"I heard from Cousin Eugenie," he said.

"Indeed," Miss Julie said, ruffled as ever at the mention of that relative.

"She says that on account of the war, the business of claiming the

money will have to be postponed. Because the French are in it," he explained, not at all certain that Miss Julie was *au courant* in such matters.

Miss Julie regarded him thoughtfully. "You mean we'll have to wait now?" she inquired.

"Yes."

"Well," said Miss Julie, "I don't doubt that's the last I'll ever hear of it, at my age. I'll be satisfied if me boys and me grandchildren get some little out of it. I might have known anything Eugenie Poiron had her hands in would come to no good."

Henri's response was to shrug, and this irritated his elderly cousin.

"It's all very well for you to shrug your shoulders that way, Henri," she said, "but I don't feel so forgiving about it. I never could stand that Eugenie Poiron. She has a bad tongue. As long as I live I'll never forgive her for saying that I married poor Andrew because it was me only chance. Never. Why, I had lots of beaux. Lots of them. I was one of the most sought-after gyrls in Charleston."

Henri had been too young to know this, but he nodded agreement. Miss Julie's thoughts seemed to be far away.

"No doubt," she said suddenly, "Leonie will be getting married one of these days."

"I suppose so," Henri said reluctantly. Though he had certainly not intended to discuss Leonie with his Cousin Julie, the thought occurred to him that perhaps she might serve as an ally.

"I'm a little worried about the child," he told her. "You know she's going around with that Calvert boy."

"Eddie Calvert's nephew," Miss Julie said musingly, as if cataloguing the young man clearly in her mind. "His mother was Carrie Fletcher. She thought until the day of her death that Catholics were trying to poison her. Her mother was Flora Calhoun, not the same family as the John C. Calhouns, although they probably would have liked to think so. Eddie Calvert used to be soft on poor Tessie. At least so *she* said."

"Yes," Henri said, for he had heard this far too often. "Well, I don't approve of the Calverts. I don't like Leonie being interested in that boy. I put him out of the yard once because he had misbehaved. But it's no use to tell Leonie about the Calverts. She won't

listen. . . . One thing, though, she might pay some attention to if it could be impressed on her, and that is that she would be facing a mixed marriage. Not that I really think things are as serious as that, but it's well to be forewarned."

"Forewarned," Miss Julie agreed, "is forearmed."

"You married a Protestant," Henri said.

"Well," said Miss Julie with a sigh, "poor Andrew didn't give me any trouble on that score, and, God bless him, he saw the light before he died. But his family—" She frowned. "They made him very unhappy about it," she said bitterly. "I didn't give a sou marquee for the whole kit and caboodle of them but I was sorry for Pa now and then."

This was not entirely what Henri wanted. He wanted Miss Julie to say how she had felt about the religious implications of the matter.

"They made me sick, the whole shooting match," said the old lady, somewhat aggrievedly. "There's no use raking up old scores, but the Sharps were peddlers in New England, and I don't doubt they sold wooden nutmegs. My poor father felt that it was a great come-down for us, so I guess neither side was entirely satisfied. No, I certainly wouldn't advise any gyrl to put herself in my fix."

Henri took a deep breath. "So you would advise Leonie to be careful about this Calvert boy?"

"What's that got to do with it?" Miss Julie inquired, truculently. "The Calverts aren't from New England and never had any connection with it. They come of very good family. Of course this sounds as if I might be criticizing poor Andrew, but I'm not. Pa was as fine a man as you could want. A little obstinate now and then . . . When he was on his deathbed, poor fellow, he wouldn't take a little whisky that the doctor prescribed because he'd always been a teetotaler."

"What I'm trying to get at," Henri said, with desperate earnestness, "is the idea of mixed marriages."

"Well, of course," Miss Julie said judicially, "the non-Catholic has to promise that he will allow the children to be brought up in the faith."

"Yes," Henri said, becoming impatient, "I know that, Cousin Julie. But—"

"We were married by the Bishop," Miss Julie said, "because we got a special dispensation. Dear me, it was a long time ago, after Pa came home from the War. He'd been in prison, you know, and he had that wound in his shoulder that always bothered him when the weather got damp." She beamed at Henri. "You were just about fifteen years old then," she said, "and Heloise was a fat little girl."

Henri said, vainly attempting to breast this flood of reminiscence, "I don't like the Calverts. I never thought Eddie Calvert should have been allowed to stay in Charleston after the way he behaved in the War."

"People said he was afraid to fight," Miss Julie recalled. "But he wasn't afraid to stay right on the streets and say what he thought. No, I don't believe he was afraid. Of course, Tessie and I never had anything to do with him for a long time, since poor Willie Fisher and Pa had been in the War and felt so strongly about it, and we almost had a fuss once at Christmas dinner because Henry and Annette made the mistake of asking Charlie Beecham and Eddie Calvert at the same time. I forget," she said regretfully, "just how it turned out. It seems to me that Henry asked Eddie Calvert and Annette asked Charlie Beecham without consulting Henry. It may have been in 1902, or maybe it was 1901. The Exposition was still going on—"

Unable to bear any more of this history, Henri rose and said that he must be getting home to dinner.

"One more word about what I've asked you, Cousin Julie. Would you use your influence with Leonie?"

Miss Julie wagged her head solemnly. "I never interfere with people," she said virtuously. "And don't you go putting your foot down too hard, Henri. Young people do just what you ask them not to do, nowadays. And it's so easy for them to run away with these automobiles."

It seemed to Henri that his Cousin Julie's faculties were failing, and on his way home he repeated this thought to himself with variations.

Miss Julie, a keen critic of appearances, murmured that poor Henri was looking more like a Johnny-cock-horse every day.

"Of course Henri is always imagining things. The idea of that

Calvert boy being interested in that puny little Leonie! She looks like a mulatto, anyway.

"I like Henri Lemay's unmitigated gall, thinking that anybody in his family is too good for the Calverts! The pastry-baking Dulacs!

"Of course, mixed marriages are a risk. But he'd better let that little gypsy marry when she has the chance, unless he wants her to be like his Antoinette. And if he thinks I'm going to cast any reflections on Pa's memory by condemning marriage to a Protestant, he's buying rotten meat. Besides, Pa became a Catholic before he died. If I hadn't married him, he might have been in the outer darkness for all eternity.

"Maybe Leonie could convert this young man and save his immortal soul. And if I helped her," Miss Julie thought, "that wouldn't do me own chances of salvation a bit of harm. I'll have to think about it."

Leonie appeared at table in her best flouncy shirtwaist and with her black hair correct to the last single strand.

"You're going somewhere?" Henri inquired.

"Oh, Lincoln is going to take me for a little spin in his car. We'll probably drive to Summerville and back."

Henri's heart turned over a couple of times, as he recalled Cousin Julie's ominous remark about elopements, but he was sure that was nonsense. His feeling diminished to one of disappointment. He had thought of asking Leonie to go to the band concert at Hampton Park. He did not like to go alone, and since her joints had become so stiff Antoinette had been forced to abandon this pleasure. And Heloise was planning to visit Miss Georgie Peters and hear about her digestion.

"You don't seem overcome with pleasure," Leonie twitted him.

"I don't want you to be compromised," Henri said.

Leonie laughed. "Uncle, you've been reading novels," she said, her good humor entirely restored. "Or sneaking off to the Princess or the Majestic in the afternoon and seeing those movies."

"I suppose we'll have to get used to you being grown up and not treating us with respect any more," Henri scolded. "I'd like you to know that I consulted my father about my undertakings until I was thirty years old."

"You were a product of a dying age," Leonie said.

"Leonie," Heloise said, "I think that's enough disrespect. Now stop it."

But it seemed to Henri that she was just managing to keep herself from laughing. He wasn't a bit sure that Heloise saw things his way.

Chapter Twenty-Four

MISS JULIE, WHOSE occupations had been boring her of late—she had wearied of quilting and the collection of stamps for the buying back of Chinese orphans—was fertile soil for the sort of idea her talk with Henri had planted in her mind.

For years she had been struggling to rescue the soul of her backsliding son-in-law, the otherwise excellent Henry O'Donnell, and her efforts had not been crowned with success. Here, in the person of Lincoln Calvert, was a brand to be snatched from the burning.

The project was irresistible, and the more Miss Julie thought about it the more irresistible it became. By Monday morning it had reached the point of action.

She put on her black coat and her hat and veil and started out for the little house on Coming Street, hoping that Heloise would be in and Leonie out. And on the way she assessed her feelings.

"I want it understood that I'm not doing this so much for Leonie," she murmured to herself. "That boy is a whole lot better than she deserves. I always knew that gyirl was going to cost them tears. Ever since they started spoiling her the first day she came to stay. Leonie must have this. Leonie must have that. College!" Miss Julie muttered with emphasis, reaching the climax of her disapproval. "College for the niece of a poor buckra that hasn't got two red cents to leak out of the holes in his pants pockets. It's a wonder to me he didn't plan to have her make the Grand Tour. There's certainly a crack running through that Lemay family.

"Henri and his legacy.

"Antoinette Fielding, and her precious marble-seated privy. It's a queer place for grandeur.

"They make me sick sometimes.

"Tchk.

"Well, here we are."

Queenie answered the bell, and Miss Julie bustled in, roaring good-naturedly that she had just come in to pay a short visit, and Queenie quite unnecessarily went upstairs to announce her. Miss Julie plodded up, and found Heloise sorting out the laundry.

"Cousin Julie!" she exclaimed affectionately. "I hope you'll excuse me. I have to send all this back. That fool gyrl who does our washing kept it until today and then she sent her boy with it, and he borrowed a goat cart." She wrinkled her nose. "I tried airing it out, but it's no use. And yet I hate to make the poor thing do it all over for nothing."

Miss Julie nodded.

"Go right ahead, child. Don't put on any ceremony for me. You're right. It smells awful. Did you ever hear about the time Brother Joe put the dead eel in the laundry bag?"

Heloise, who loved a crude prank too, smiled at the recollection.

"Leonie home?" Miss Julie asked, as soon as she was established.

"No," Heloise said. "She went fishing with that Calvert boy."

"They're together a lot, aren't they?" Miss Julie inquired, rummaging in her bag for a peppermint.

"A good deal. It worries Henri so. He hates those Calverts."

"Heloise, do you think Leonie is going to marry that young man?"

"I haven't heard anything about it," Heloise said. "But Henri acts as if they were going tomorrow to get their license. I've got two children on my hands, now."

Miss Julie nodded.

"Henri and Leonie are at swords' points. Right now he'd have a duck fit if he knew where she was."

"I've been thinking this matter over," Miss Julie said, "and I think it might be a good thing for Leonie. The child is almost twenty-two and of course she can do what she likes. But I've been wondering if Henri couldn't be made to see reason about it."

Heloise looked doubtful.

"He seems to be a nice boy," Miss Julie went on, "and he's good-looking and certainly he's smart. The Calverts are all smart."

"Henri hates Colonel Calvert and thinks they are all fiends of some kind," Heloise said. "And he doesn't like the idea of marriage with a Protestant."

"Have you ever thought that Leonie might be the means of converting this young man?"

Heloise looked at her thoughtfully. "No, I never have," she said at last, "I never have. I don't think Leonie is the sort to convert anybody."

It was Miss Julie's firm belief, too, that Leonie had very little piety. She did not like the way the girl slouched in her pew when she was kneeling, and she never had liked it.

"What is Henri going to do about it?" she inquired.

Heloise frowned. "There's very little he can do," she admitted, "but he can be very unpleasant when he gets a notion to be. He can make Leonie feel very unhappy, and himself, not to speak of me, too. And he can make things unpleasant for the young man. Unless he's deeply in love with Leonie, and I doubt that too."

"Oh, you doubt it," Miss Julie said.

"I haven't seen any indication of a *grande passion*," Heloise said. "Of course I'd like to see Leonie married. There aren't so many eligible young men nowadays. She hasn't got much of a chance to meet them, and this college business has just made her uppity and hard to please."

"Yes, indeed," Miss Julie agreed heartily. "I always said so and I always will. It's no use to talk to Henry O'Donnell, though. His head is like a rock. He's determined to send Betsy off to college."

"Henry O'Donnell has the money," Heloise said. "I've often felt that our money might have been better spent in giving Leonie a good time and making it possible for her to know more people. She's had a standing invitation to go to Virginia to visit some friends, but it will cost a heap of money."

Miss Julie sighed.

"Everything costs a heap of money nowadays," she said. "Well, now, it's none of my affairs, but I think you ought to encourage this young man. Husbands don't grow on trees these days. As for a mixed marriage, I made one myself and I've never regretted it. Me children are all good Catholics and it never turned me away from me duties."

"I'll think it over," Heloise said. "But for Heaven's sake don't say anything to Henri. I wouldn't want him to think I was going behind his back. My life wouldn't be worth living."

Miss Julie wagged her head. "For Heaven's sake, child, you know I'm not the kind that tells me insides."

She left Heloise tempted to collaborate. She did not want to make

Henri unhappy, but on the other hand Leonie was not happy. After all, Leonie was her own sister's child.

"Single blessedness," she said to herself, "is not what that gyrl is fit for." And since she did not view Leonie with the same unqualified admiration as Henri, she thought there must be something about the girl which did not attract young men. This Lincoln Calvert was turning into a steady and promising young man, and Leonie wouldn't find anyone as good-looking in a hurry.

And perhaps Leonie's children would have musical talents and would make something of themselves in the world. Most of all, even if Heloise did not admit this to herself, it would be a blessed relief to have her life to herself.

Still, she did not find it easy to make up her mind to practise secret warfare against Henri. She thought she would wait and see before taking sides too definitely. Sometimes these matters had a way of arranging themselves.

The first minor crisis was Henri's discovery of Leonie's absence. He looked blankly at the two-place setting of the table.

"Where is Leonie?" he demanded.

"She went fishing," Heloise said.

"Fishing?"

"Yes. Lincoln Calvert got hold of a launch belonging to some friend of his and they went out in the river."

Henri was dumbfounded. "I can't turn my back," he growled, "without that fellow coming and taking her somewhere. That settles it. I'm going to send her to Virginia right away. Have those people repeated their invitation?"

"Not that I know of. But it was a standing invitation. She can go whenever she wants."

"I'll see right off about getting the tickets," Henri said. "And you and Leonie can decide about the things she'll need."

"Brother," Heloise said, "don't you think you're rushing things a little? Leonie ought to be consulted, and she has to make the arrangements with those people. She just can't take the train up there without saying anything about it."

"I don't see any reason for delay," Henri said. "Every day counts in a situation like this." He helped himself liberally to rice and gravy and began to eat very fast. "As for consulting Leonie," he added, "she's going, whether she likes it or not."

"You won't hurry things by bolting your food," Heloise told him. Henri frowned. "I don't need overseeing."

"It was just a caution," Heloise said. "You need to calm your nerves."

"How can I be calm with this fate hanging over my only niece?"

Heloise regarded him appraisingly. "No doubt," she said, "you're perfectly sure that having Leonie away for three weeks or a month will mend matters completely?"

"I'm counting on something like that. Out of sight, out of mind."

"That wasn't what happened when she went to the mountains."

"You've forgotten," Henri said triumphantly, "that they had a quarrel after that trip. It might happen again."

"Where will you send her when she comes back from Virginia, if your idea doesn't work?"

"One thing at a time," Henri said, as if that were his rule in life. "I'll think of something if this infatuation continues."

"Of course, you'll do as you think fit," Heloise said. "But, for goodness' sake, don't thrust this trip down Leonie's throat. Don't let her feel that you're determined for her to go. She'll see that right away and then wild horses won't get her away from here."

"She'll do as I say," Henri said. "I want her to go immediately. That young man has a car, don't forget, and I wouldn't be surprised if he and Leonie are planning to elope."

This was too much for Heloise, accustomed as she was to his flights of fancy. "Why, he's getting silly," she thought.

Leonie was in a radiant mood. She had come home crusted with salt and bearing a string of fish which Lincoln had helped her to catch, and after her bath and a nap she sat down and played popular songs on the piano.

"That's only the second time she's touched it since she came home," Heloise thought. "I guess there's no doubt that she's in love. It's terrible to be so dependent on one person for your happiness."

She waited apprehensively for Henri to begin his Virginia campaign, as she called it. She almost thought of warning him that Leonie was in a very good humor and that perhaps he would do better to wait until some signs of dissatisfaction were apparent. But years of experience had taught her that trying to alter Henri's course was likely to lead only to trouble.

Henri was prepared to be canny. He welcomed Leonie warmly and remarked that he had missed her at dinner.

"But I caught you a nice breakfast," Leonie told him. "Four bream and a chub."

"You might go into the business," Heloise said.

"I'm glad you enjoyed yourself, my dear," Henri said. "It must be dull for you here."

"Oh, it's not so dull," Leonie said.

Henri ignored this evidence of a better outlook. "Your aunt and I have been talking things over," he said, "and it seems to us that you ought to have a little change. I'm prepared to send you up to visit those people in Virginia."

"Uncle, that's nice of you," Leonie said unenthusiastically.

"Oh, we're only too glad to do anything to make our little girl happy," Henri said, chuckling with the delight of instant success.

"The trouble is, Uncle," Leonie said, "that while I have a standing invitation—"

"I know," Henri said. "All you need to do is write them and say you find it possible to come."

Leonie glanced at him doubtfully. "It will take a lot of clothes," she said. "They dress up a good deal, even in their summer place."

"We'll take care of that," Henri said confidently.

"I don't think I ought to call on you and Auntie for more sacrifices."

"Never worry your pretty little head about that," Henri said. "You just go ahead. You're only young once. Your aunt and I are getting on and there's very little we need or want."

He thought Heloise made a mocking face at a moment when Leonie wasn't looking up, and just for an instant he thought of the plumber's and roofer's bills, the Morris Plan payment, the interest on notes, and Mr. Pincus. . . . But there was his insurance. He had never borrowed against it, but this was a very special circumstance and he must be prepared to make any sacrifice.

"I'll write to them," Leonie said, slowly, "and see what they say. But, Uncle, are you sure you want to spend all this money?"

"I tell you that doesn't enter into it at all," Henri said. "If you've really set your heart on going—"

Leonie said, still more slowly, "Of course, I'd have a good time. But I feel a lot more satisfied now that I've got kind of settled."

"We think you ought to go," Henri insisted. "There's nothing to keep you here, after all. Anything you leave will be here when you come back. Charleston doesn't change that fast."

"I still don't feel right about it," Leonie said.

"You leave that to us," Henri said. "Now go write that letter." Leonie rose and went upstairs.

"She couldn't resist it," Henri said triumphantly.

But Heloise knew that Leonie didn't want to go. "And," she said to herself, "I'll bet anything she won't."

Leonie cursed herself for being so weak about that trip. She had wanted to seem grateful and back out gracefully, and now her plan had misfired.

It was the worst possible time to go away. She was enjoying herself, anyway—and although Lincoln seemed to be very fond of her, he hadn't shown the intense seriousness she was anxious for. "Three weeks away from here," she thought, "and I'll have to start all over again. He's got success on the brain."

But she agreed to write the letter, and with despair and rage in her heart she began it, with a prayer that something might happen to make it inconvenient for the McDevitts to have her. There was just a possibility of enlisting Estella McDevitt's help in framing some kind of excuse, but to write a letter of that kind would be rude when they had asked her. No, that wouldn't do.

"I've certainly gone and put my foot in it," Leonie thought in disgust.

Pretending to be ill wouldn't do any good. Her Uncle Henri would have her bound hand and foot if she as much as suggested that she didn't feel well enough to go away.

There was only one thing to do—face the music. "I'll tell Uncle I can't possibly go," she resolved.

However, she had missed her best chance, for Henri had gone off to visit Colonel Beecham. She finished the letter, but left it on her desk.

Colonel Beecham lived on the top floor of a house in Logan Street. When, perspiring a little after his walk and climb, Henri knocked and entered, he found his old friend at the table in his study, examining sharks' teeth which he had picked up on the Boulevard.

"Well, well," said the Colonel, "Henri Lemay! Come in, come in." He rose shakily and held out his hand. "How are all at home?"

"All fine, thank you, Colonel," Henri responded. "You look well."

"For an old man. For an old man," said the Colonel. "I was just puttering with a few of these trifles. I've been spending most of the time on my map."

He pointed to the large map of Europe hung on the wall, in which he had carefully set push pins to indicate the position of the opposing armies.

Henri looked on without any great interest while the Colonel explained. His own military experience had been limited to brief service under Wade Hampton in the 'seventies, and he was not sure that would be called military service, exactly.

"Of course," the Colonel was saying, "it won't last six months. But it's an ugly affair, an ugly affair. Never thought we'd see another one."

He went on with his description of the lines of battle. Henri listened absently. He had the natural sympathies of his French descent, but he could not help thinking of the way France had treated the Church.

The Colonel abandoned his map. "And your fortune?" he inquired.

"You were right, Colonel. We'll have to wait a bit."

"Of course. But it needn't be very long. Then you'll have things settled, and," he added with a deep laugh, "I can go back to my scientific trifles." He pointed to his papers and the collections in the little glass cases.

"Speaking of natural history," he said after a moment's pause. "I know an interesting young friend of yours, Henri." The Colonel stroked his white beard. "Joseph Newman. That boy knows everything about the flora and fauna of the Low Country. Astounding. Astounding. I thought he seemed like a rustic simpleton, but I found out that he's got the whole thing at his fingertips. I told him I'd be glad to help him out. Promising young fellow. Very promising."

"Joe Newman? Oh, certainly," Henri said. "He sings in the choir at the Cathedral. Nice tenor voice."

The Colonel looked alarmed at this mention of the vocal art, as if

he knew that his old friend was quite likely to spend a good while discussing it if he got started.

"Oh, yes," he said, clearing his throat, "the choir. Well, that's fine. Young people ought to take part in church doings. No doubt of it. Well, as I was telling you, this Newman boy is a born naturalist. Ever since he was a little boy he's been wandering up and down the Island, and over on Wappoo Cut. He came to see me because he'd heard about my discovery of the Tennessee nuthatch, and we had quite a talk. He's discovered a new variety of sandpiper."

"The boy has a fine voice," Henri said. "A natural lyric tenor. Do you know that he can sing up to B flat as easily as he can sing the octave below it? He wants to be a singer."

Colonel Beecham laughed tolerantly. "What boy hasn't had these big dreams?" he asked. "Lord, Henri, I wanted to be all sorts of things. I was going to be a great orator like Mr. Calhoun, and a great lawyer like Mr. Petigru, until he—until he took his unfortunate stand. Maybe if I hadn't gone to the Citadel, and got a commission right away in the War, I might have done something else but be an old soldier and potter around at the Water Works while I collected birds and shells for the Museum. Of course," (the Colonel was in a reminiscent mood) "it was the discovery of those fossils in the phosphate diggin's that inspired me. Now this Newman boy may have wanted to be all sorts of things like a baseball player and minister—I beg your pardon, priest—and a singer, but science is his true vocation and I told him so. I told him to go ahead and sing for his pleasure and his friends' pleasure, but not to give up a possible brilliant career in science for a doubtful future as a singer."

"I don't know, Colonel," Henri said, "it seems to me that the young man has a success ahead of him if he's really willing to study singing the way he ought to. It seems to me that he could do that and indulge this nature hobby on the side."

The Colonel regarded him keenly. "Listen to me, suh. Do you think any singer is going to spend hours standing out in the marshes waiting for a rare specimen? Not on your life. He'll be thinking of the danger of a sore throat and what it will do to his precious vocal cords. Why, when I wrote that paper on the migratory habits of the loggerhead turtle—I believe you have a copy?"

Henri nodded. Everybody who knew the Colonel had his paper on the ubiquity of the loggerhead turtle.

"Magnificent," he said. "I remember it well."

"Well," said the Colonel, "I wrote that paper—a modest contribution to the annals of science, but every one of us is just like a coral polyp, you know, adding his bit to the heap—why, I wrote that paper," the Colonel continued getting up and pacing around in his excitement, "after uncounted hours watching those turtles. I watched them dig their holes and lay their eggs. I caught the young ones and marked their shells. I marked the shells of the older ones, too, when I could catch them—and one of the devils that we got over on his back, for they're as strong as demons, gathered up a flipper of black mud and let me have it right in the eye. Now, Henri, a man whose heart is in singing isn't going to brave the wet and the sun and the malaria to discover things like that."

"But—" Henri said.

The Colonel waved a gaunt, wrinkled hand. "Let me finish, if you don't mind. Of course he told me he was torn between the study of singing and the pursuit of zoology or botany, and I told him he ought to know you. He said he knew you well."

"As a matter of fact," Henri said, "he's been interested in my niece, Leonie. He was quite faithful for a while, and then they seemed to disagree."

"Too bad," said the Colonel. "Fine young man. Very fine. Make a good husband. I never knew a man in love with nature who wasn't a good man."

Henri debated whether to take the Colonel into his confidence, and decided to.

"I'd like to know what you think about this," he said. "As you know, we aren't the sort of people, you and I, who tell our insides. But the young man Leonie seems to have her heart set on is Calvert's nephew Lincoln."

The Colonel's kindly face reddened. He fingered his snowy beard and his string tie and seemed at a loss for words.

"What?" he finally brought out. "The nephew of that blackleg—that betrayer of his fatherland—that—"

Unable to find a sufficiently strong expletive, the Colonel stopped. He put a comforting hand on Henri's shoulder. "My friend," he said, "naturally I feel for you. You've been like a father to that girl. Better than most fathers. And now this!

"Good heavens," Colonel Beecham continued, moved to his very

roots, "it's just like yesterday, several of us trying to make Calvert see the light. No threats or insults or anything of the sort. Just a group of young Southern gentlemen trying to reason with a man who was going astray. I can still hear him, in that silly way of his, saying, 'No matter what you say, Beecham, the Union must be preserved.' He was willing to fight about it, too, but I'm glad to say that we had cooler heads than he had. And then," the Colonel went on, "that younger brother of his having the effrontery to name his son Lincoln Petigru Calvert. A slap in the face to the cause we fought for—like this Southall woman and her memorial to John Brown. I'm glad to know that the Daughters of the Confederacy and the Sumter Guards have made a good strong protest. But Calvert approves that! A cynic and a scoffer. Why, I've even heard that he referred to me as a blower of birds' eggs that spent my time annoying harmless animals when I ought to be trying to reduce the bacterial content of Goose Creek water."

"He was always insolent," Henri said.

"You listen to me, Henri," said the Colonel, drawing himself up very straight. "This must be fought to the death. There must be no turning back. Don't let a thing like that happen, my boy. Fight it tooth and nail."

Henri nodded.

He left the Colonel's house more determined than ever to dissuade Leonie from the course she was adopting, and when he got home he went immediately to her room and knocked.

"Have you written that letter, Leonie?" he asked.

"Yes," Leonie told him.

"Well, give it to me," Henri said. "I thought I might mail it before the last collection."

Chapter Twenty-Five

THE McDEVITTS TOOK their time about replying, and Henry fretted. His dissatisfaction was not lessened by two visits from Lincoln Calvert that week and a swimming expedition to the Isle of Palms.

"I don't want Leonie to see so much of that young man," was the mild way he expressed it to Antoinette. "I've tried to arrange a visit to Virginia with some friends of hers, but first they gave her the invitation and now they don't answer."

"A week isn't long," Antoinette said. "After all, they may have to prepare a bit before they can be sure of making her comfortable."

"Not in this case," Henri said. "These people have lots of money."

"Well, you just be patient," Antoinette said. "Of course, I don't agree with you about Lincoln. I've always thought he was a darling boy. Ever since the time he asked if Grandfather Fielding wore a cravat under his beard."

"I don't like the young man's principles. Borrowing money to get his start, for instance. And working as a waiter at college. And, my dear Antoinette, I don't approve of his family."

"Nevertheless," Antoinette insisted, "he's a fine young man and he's going to be a success. There aren't such a lot of nice young men in Charleston who would want to marry your niece—there, I said that badly, didn't I? I mean enough nice young men fit for little Leonie to marry. She hasn't been here to visit me yet, you know."

"Just forgetfulness," Henri said. "She is going to."

"As I was saying," Antoinette resumed, "I wish you would look favorably on this affair. I'm quite sure you don't want the child to remain single."

This was a touchy subject, and Henri deliberated before replying.

"I'm not anxious to marry her off, Antoinette," he said. "She'll always be welcome at our house."

Antoinette reached over and put a small bony hand on his. "Henri," she said, "I hate to say this, but you and Heloise are not

going to be around forever to take care of her. I'd think you'd want to see her provided for—"

Henri did not particularly relish this intimation of mortality.

"I'm feeling very well at present," he said drily.

"There are very few gentlemen," Antoinette said, "who look as young as you do at your age."

"And the same is true of you," Henri said. "In fact, I never think of—"

Antoinette was pleased, but she interrupted.

"Henri," she said, "all over Charleston there are people like you and me who waited too long."

"I did my best," Henri said, astonished that she should discuss the matter in such plain terms. He even wondered if Antoinette could be in full possession of her faculties. "Circumstances were against us," he said. "We belong to the wrong generation."

"But Leonie—" Antoinette said softly.

Henri held up his glass of sherry and squinted at it. "I would rather," he said finally, "have Leonie remain single all her life than contract a misalliance, which such a marriage would be from our point of view. I don't think it would make Leonie happy. We had better not discuss it."

Antoinette looked hurt.

"I am no matchmaker, if that's what you mean," she said haughtily. "But I am fond of that young man. I think I am a good judge of character. What," she asked, with a great air of the clever hostess changing the subject, "do you think about the war?"

"I don't think it will last long," Henri said. "It's my belief that it can't last more than six months, once the French and English war machine gets into operation. I was talking to Colonel Beecham just the other day and he confirmed me in that opinion."

"Other people feel differently," Antoinette said.

"Oh, you've been talking to Calvert," Henri said. "He's pro-German and he's sure, I suppose, that his side is going to win."

"Edmund insists on being the devil's advocate," Antoinette explained. "He told me once that the pursuit of truth was the only pleasure he had in life, but that it was so exclusive that it helped to make him happy."

"Oh, anybody can say smart things," Henri said. He did not like subtleties; a set of standards by which you could instantly tell

truth from untruth was more to his taste. With difficulty, he refrained from the ungentlemanly gesture of sniffing at Colonel Calvert and all his works. "If a man hasn't found out the truth at his age," he said, seizing upon the only advantage he had over the Colonel, that of being younger, "I wonder if he ever will."

"Oh, it's never too late, is it?" Antoinette asked.

"Calvert is seventy-five."

"But very well preserved."

"Perhaps," Henri said, not liking to concede that.

"Sometimes I wish you two could be friends. Such interesting men, and so different from everyone else. It seems a shame."

"I wish I could gratify you on that score," Henri said, "but it's quite impossible."

Afterward he thought what a preposterous suggestion Antoinette had made. Friendship between him and that renegade blagyard, indeed! It was just too bad that there were people to encourage Calvert.

"One thing is certain," Henri said firmly to himself, "and that is that I'm not a-going to allow people to persuade me against my principles. I'm the best judge of what is good for Leonie. That Calvert and his scoundrel of a nephew have been working on Antoinette's sympathies, trying to get her to win me over. There isn't much I wouldn't do for Antoinette, but there are limits. And if everybody keeps trying to persuade me that I must agree to this affair, I can see that I'm not going to have a friend left outside of Colonel Beecham."

"I believe Antoinette is trying to make me favor this affair of Leonie and that young blagyard," he told Heloise.

"Indeed," Heloise said, put off as she always was by the mention of Antoinette, "then I suppose it's as good as approved."

"You may joke about it, Sister, but I was quite firm with her."

"That's right. You don't want her to get the upper hand this early in the game," Heloise said.

"I don't see any reason for disagreeable remarks," Henri said, "or for laughing about it."

"I wasn't laughing," Heloise said. But he knew better.

After Mass Sunday it was Henri's ill-fortune to run right into Miss Julie, and as he could not get away he offered to walk home

with her. They exchanged news about their respective households, Miss Julie being, as usual, put out by Annette's failure to acquaint her with the details of the children's health.

"I suppose Leonie is still traipsing around with that Calvert boy?" she said, as they were walking along Rutledge Avenue beside the Pond. "The water's very low," she added.

Henri regarded the water and admitted that it was low. "Leonie," he said, "is still keeping company with him. There's nothing I can do about it, I suppose. I'm her gyuardian, but she's of age and I have no money to threaten her with. I've been trying not to make matters worse by making a fuss. But, Cousin Julie, it goes against my grain. I don't like to see that child preparing misery for herself. Of course he'll never marry her," he went on hopefully. "He'll keep up this friendship until his good looks attract some girl with money and then we'll be rid of him. But it won't be very good for Leonie that way, either."

Miss Julie had been puffing along beside him, but now she lowered the flag. "You'll have to walk a little slower, Henri," she said. "I'm getting too old to run the way you do."

"Excuse me, Cousin Julie," Henri said. "I guess I'm a bit nervous. I've been terribly worried about all this, and I don't get any sympathy from anyone. Anyone. Heloise thinks everything is a joke, and Antoinette is hand in glove with Colonel Calvert, as they call him, and I think he's been talking to her about it. I never thought the high and mighty Calverts would want one of their family to marry with plain people like us." He laughed heavily to accentuate his sarcasm.

"They say all the world loves a lover," Miss Julie explained.

"Well, I'm going to send her to Virginia," Henri said, disappointed that Cousin Julie hadn't broken out into passionate espousal of his cause. "That will get her away from here for three weeks to a month, and perhaps by that time she'll have cooled off towards this young fellow."

"Virginia?" Miss Julie asked doubtfully.

"She has some friends she made at college. They've invited her to come up and spend some time with them."

"Do you know anything about them?" Miss Julie inquired, with the natural suspicion a Charlestonian feels for foreigners.

"I've met them," Henri said, "and they seemed quite respectable."

He kept a guard on his tongue so that he would not let slip the damning fact that Mr. McDevitt was a gambler. Cousin Julie would have that all over the county. "They are quite well-to-do," he added, apologetically.

"Oh, well, you can't always pick and choose your friends in this world, no matter what they say about it," Miss Julie said, willing to forgive the McDevitts for having money if they were otherwise acceptable. "Now, as far as having Leonie away goes, you'd better not count too much on absence. Absence makes the heart grow fonder, they say."

"I don't believe that," Henri said. "Out of sight, out of mind, is what I say."

Miss Julie plodded along thoughtfully. "I'll tell you, Henri," she said, after a while, "there's never been a family that was satisfied with their children's choice of wives or husbands. My father didn't approve of Pa, and Pa's family didn't have any use for me. I can't say I was overjoyed when Annette married Henry O'Donnell, although I dare say she could have gone farther and fared worse. And I didn't like Francis' marriage any too well."

"That may be as you say, Cousin Julie," Henri said, irritated at the crumbling, one by one, of the supports he had hoped for. "But I'm determined to make it impossible for this affair to go on."

"Oh, well, if you're determined," Miss Julie said, "I suppose you might be able to stop it." And she chuckled disconcertingly.

"I don't want Leonie corrupted. I don't think the young man is trustworthy."

Miss Julie misinterpreted just enough to be startled.

"You can't mean that you expect such a thing to happen," she said. "Young gyrls of our standing don't—"

"I don't mean that, Cousin," Henri said. "I know Leonie is good. But I don't want her to fall in with that young rascal's ideas. His uncle was a Unionist and he's an unbeliever and a dangerous radical."

"Oh," said Miss Julie, who could not conceive of any intellectual victory of the sort; she hadn't changed her mind in fifty years and was proud of it. "I wouldn't concern myself over that."

"But there's no telling what sort of ideas he may put into her head. And then leave her flat—and with that association on her record, nobody else will want to have anything to do with her."

Miss Julie refused to take this seriously. "You've got yourself all worked up, Henri," she said.

"It's my duty," Henri said doggedly, "as the child's gyuardian."

"You stop worrying and pray," Miss Julie advised, reflecting that as she would be praying on the other side this could not affect the outcome she was secretly favoring. "Maybe that money will come along and you can send Leonie to California or some place."

Henri opened the gate for her and swept off his hat. "Good-bye, Cousin Julie," he said.

"Good-bye," Miss Julie responded. "Give me love to Heloise, and remember me in your prayers."

She watched Henri's diminutive figure marching pertly along Ashley Avenue.

"He's stubborn as a mule," she muttered. "As stubborn as a mule. The child is just like him. And I'll bet she gets her way. As the twig is bent, so is the tree inclined. And they've been spoiling that child since the first day she came into their house half-dead from eating bananas."

Chapter Twenty-Six

THE LETTER FROM Mrs. McDevitt came on Monday.

"What does she say?" Henri inquired, impatiently. He was leaving for the office, and he was late.

Leonie handed him the letter without a word. It was full of apologies for tardiness, and it informed her that Mr. McDevitt's sister, who had been staying with them, had been stricken and was convalescing.

"So you can see, my dear Leonie," Mrs. McDevitt wrote, "that we have been rather busy. As Miss McDevitt is still weak from the effects of her long illness, it is really with regret that I have to say that I am afraid we have to put off the *great treat* of having you here this summer. This is a great disappointment to all of us, and poor Estella, who will write later, is quite heartbroken over it.

"However, if Miss McDevitt continues to mend, which I hope for our sakes as well as hers, we may come to Charleston in the fall. Mr. McDevitt has some business which may take him there.

"And if you are still single next spring or summer, Leonie, we will expect you then. Or perhaps you will stop in to see us on your honeymoon trip?

"Our best wishes to your aunt, whom we have not had the pleasure of knowing, and your delightful uncle.

"Most sincerely,
"Maria McDevitt"

Henri's face was cloudy. "Well, that's that," he said gloomily. "Don't be too cast down about it, Leonie. We'll find some other place for you to go."

"Oh, never mind, Uncle," Leonie said, and as he went out she dashed upstairs to tell Heloise.

Heloise read the letter hastily. "Well, well! even the rich have their troubles," she said. "All that fuss for nothing." She looked

at Leonie sharply. "I must say, you don't seem to be heartbroken about it."

Leonie flushed. "I'm trying to learn to take disappointments," she said. "I'm probably going to have a good many of them before I get too old to care at all."

"About forty, I suppose you mean," Heloise said. "You little hypocrite, Leonie. You know you didn't want to go in the first place."

Leonie was silent.

"Tell the truth and shame the devil," Heloise said. "You didn't want to leave that young man, isn't that the truth?"

"Why, he's not that much to me," Leonie said, opening her eyes very wide. "I can't imagine what put that notion into your head."

"My dear child," Heloise said, "I wasn't born yesterday. The way you picked up when this young man came around again would have told a blind man that you were infatuated with him."

Leonie was again silent.

"Your uncle doesn't like this young man, as you know. He has reasons which seem very good to him. He doesn't think the young man is reliable. He thinks the Calverts are peculiar, which is true, God knows. And he doesn't approve of mixed marriages."

"Nothing has been said about marriage. You and Uncle are jumping to conclusions. Why can't a man and a woman just be friends?"

"Who said they couldn't? But when people see two young people together, they don't think of that."

"I don't care what anybody thinks."

"If you're in love with this boy and he doesn't show any signs of returning the feeling, you give him up right now. That's my advice."

"And suppose he is in love with me?"

"It's your own life, I suppose," Heloise said. She tried out a joking manner: "Maybe you could convert him."

Leonie took the remark quite seriously. "If I began right away," she said, "he'd think I was out to get him, wouldn't he? And if I wait until he asks me to marry him—supposing he does—and I insist upon his being a Catholic, he wouldn't be doing it out of conviction, would he? And that wouldn't be right."

"You certainly learned to argue at that college," Heloise said. "But just supposing he asked you to marry him, would you—well, of

course you'd insist upon the Church marriage and the children being brought up Catholics."

"I suppose I would."

"You suppose? Well, I am disappointed," Heloise said. "I really thought better of you."

"Was Uncle going to insist about all that if he married Miss Antoinette?"

"I am sure he would have. But let that affair be a lesson to you. Don't let anybody keep you on a string too long, or you'll wind up like that."

"You know what I think?" Leonie asked. "I think a lot of Uncle's opposition to Lincoln comes from a guilty conscience. He probably would have given in to Miss Antoinette."

"Is that one of the new ideas you learned at college?"

"It's psychology," Leonie said.

Heloise sniffed. "It must be a lot of help to you," she said.

"It helps you to understand people."

Heloise did not think this worth discussion. "No doubt this young man will be wax in your hands," she said. "The Calverts have always been famous for doing just what people wanted them to do."

"They *are* independent," Leonie said in a tone of admiration she was unable to suppress. "And Lincoln is pretty obstinate. I think, though, if he really was in love with me he'd do anything I wanted. He's really very good-natured. You know, Auntie, he tries to put on an air of being very self-centered and all that, but he's very considerate. For instance, the way he wants to do things for the colored people."

"I'm sure the wings are breaking right through the back of his coat," Heloise remarked.

"Uncle thinks his horns are breaking right through the top of his hat."

"Well, child, you don't understand how our generation feels about things," Heloise said. "He's a handsome young man and he seems pleasant enough—"

"He's sweet," Leonie said.

"They're all that way in the beginning," Heloise said, and then seeing the incredulous expression in Leonie's eyes, she cut short the discussion. She felt herself weakening and she did not want to come out against Henri.

"Don't do anything you're going to be sorry for," she said, and she put her arms around Leonie and kissed her.

In her room, Leonie executed an impromptu dance. "I don't have to go to Virginia! I don't have to go to Virginia!" she murmured happily.

She opened the top drawer of her dresser, rummaged among the confusion, and took out a yellowed snapshot. It showed her, at sixteen, standing beside Lincoln Calvert. She kissed it.

She knew that her aunt was almost ready to give in, and she felt utterly confident that her Uncle Henri would, in time, get over his dislike for Lincoln.

"But I'm going to have him," she said to herself, "no matter who gets hurt."

While Leonie was getting her hopes up, and Henri was fretting over the relentlessness of fate, Miss Susan Williams, that fount of derogatory information, was preparing to publish the biggest scoop of her career. Miss Susan's lumbago was still severe, and under ordinary circumstances she would not have ventured out, but with this news in her grasp she could not wait for people to come to see her.

Her first visit was to Madame Pugno, the not-too-popular president of the ladies' sewing circle at the Cathedral.

Nothing, Miss Susan averred, had so shocked and upset her since, years before, Miriam Wallis had renounced her vows and left the convent.

"I wish," Miss Susan said to Madame Pugno, "that I had the moral courage to tell Henri Lemay and Heloise about it. But I was always shy about carrying tales. I don't suppose it's any of my business, either, but when I see a young girl whose family are intimate friends of mine being led astray—"

She wagged her head dolefully.

Madame Pugno was impressed. "Henri Lemay has always walked around as if he owned the earth," she said. "I shouldn't be surprised if this would take him down a peg."

"If he hears about it," said Miss Susan.

"I rather imagine he will," said Madame Pugno, who was no fool.

When Miss Susan had built up the story a bit she decided to tackle Julie Gerard about it. The fat old lady had insulted her because of an innocent question concerning the sanity of her late sister

Tessie, who, as everyone knew, had been stark staring mad. Miss Susan now felt that telling Miss Julie this news at first-hand would give her a moderate amount of satisfaction.

She did not intend to visit Miss Julie, for she wanted the meeting to seem casual. She knew the other's haunts—the ten-cent store, certain German groceries where strong-flavored delicacies were for sale cheap, and the soap premium store, where Miss Julie was inclined to look in now and then to see what she could get for the wrappers she collected, to the disgust of Sarah, the maid, who considered them her perquisite.

Cruising between these points, Miss Susan was soon rewarded by a sight of her old acquaintance ambling contentedly down King Street, clutching a small sack of candies and looking avidly in the gutters for tinfoil.

"Good-afternoon, Julie," said Miss Susan. "And how are you?"

"Oh, Susan. How are you?" said Miss Julie, guardedly, for she remembered cutting the other's comb not very long before.

"I've just begun to go out," Miss Susan said plaintively. "You haven't been to see me, Julie."

"Nobody told me anything about it," Miss Julie lied politely, "or I'd have been the first to come."

"My lumbago," Miss Susan explained. "Dr. Long said it was the worst case he had ever seen. He said he didn't understand how I could stand it so patiently."

"Indeed," Miss Julie said, with a sense of frustration, since she had no such ailment. "I hope you'll continue to be well."

"I don't get around the way I used to," Miss Susan complained. "Nobody tells me anything."

Miss Julie was doubly wary.

"Things go on right under your nose and you don't know about them," Miss Susan continued. "It makes you feel kind of out of things. If I hadn't read in the paper that Sidonie Pinchot had died, I wouldn't have known."

"Sidonie Pinchot," said Miss Julie. "Oh, yes. Well, she was seventy-four, and she'd been complaining of dizzy spells for years. She had a lovely funeral."

"We were children together," said Miss Susan.

"I don't see how that can be," said Miss Julie. "She was just my

age, and you were a young lady in long dresses when Sidonie and I were still in pantalettes."

Anyone else would have been put off by this rebuff, but Miss Susan was tough.

"I suppose my poor old memory has been playing me tricks again," she said. "Well, I'm sorry I missed the funeral. She was Henri Lemay's mother's godchild, I believe."

"Yes, she was," Miss Julie said, "but they didn't get along. Old man Pinchot—"

But she checked herself. Perhaps Miss Susan did not know that bit of history.

"You mean that business about selling old Mr. Lemay the barren cow? Poor old Mr. Lemay was never much of a hand at business, was he? Henri reminds me of him a great deal. He never seems to know what's going on around him."

"Henri Lemay has had a hard time," said Miss Julie. "The poor fellow might well be a little absent-minded now and then."

"Yes," said Miss Susan, "but his own niece. After all, he's her gyardian."

Torn between curiosity and family spirit, Miss Julie regarded her fixedly. "Leonie does look a little peaky," she said, "but not because they don't take the very best care of her. Leonie is the apple of Henri's eye and always has been. She had a bad start in life, down there in Guatemala," she explained. "Bananas."

"I'm talking about something else," Miss Susan said. "Is she engaged to that Calvert boy?"

"Calvert?" Miss Julie inquired, blankly. "Oh, Eddie Calvert's nephew." She laughed heartily. "Engaged? What nonsense. I believe they're friends, although of course the boy has been away a long time."

"Well, I thought they must be," said Miss Susan, her beady eyes glinting as she prepared to give the *coup de grâce*. "Everybody says they go everywhere together—over to his farm, and off to Summer-ville, and swimming at the Isle of Palms. And Leonie without any stockings on."

This was fairly staggering, even to Miss Julie, but she put as good a face on it as she could.

"Well," she said, forcing a chuckle, "if she showed anything the Lord didn't make, the young man could throw a stick at it."

"That's as far as the story goes—no stockings," Miss Susan said significantly. "Even if that's all, it's shocking for a Catholic gyirl."

"I don't believe it," Miss Julie said stoutly.

Miss Susan was disappointed. "I've also heard," she added, "that she's thinking of joining St. Michael's Church so that she can go there with him."

"Now that," said Miss Julie, "is an unqualified lie. You may tell your informant that. No member of our family has ever been an apostate."

"Of course I don't intend to discuss this with anyone," Miss Susan said loftily.

"I am edified to hear you say so," replied Miss Julie with heavy irony. "And now I must be getting along. I hope you'll feel better. I'll remember you in me prayers."

"And you'll need them," she muttered as Miss Susan hobbled off. "Woe unto him by whom scandal cometh." She sighed. "Henri Lemay will have a duck fit about this," she thought.

Although it was her fixed policy, in dealing with Miss Susan, to mind the pithy saying that a dog that will bring a bone will carry one, and to discount the old crone's tales by seventy-five percent, she was inclined to believe this gossip. A gyirl who lounged in her pew the way Leonie did, when she ought to be kneeling up . . .

She hurried to Coming Street. Heloise, at her Monday morning task of sorting the laundry, remarked that Leonie used up a lot of clothing.

"One thing they must have taught her at college was never to put anything on twice," she said.

Miss Julie shook her head at such extravagance.

"She going to Virginia?" she asked.

"No. Somebody in the family is sick and they're too busy nursing her. Leonie wasn't too disappointed. She didn't want to go, I could see. She admitted it."

"Henri was disappointed, I suppose. I had a long talk with him yesterday, and he's dead set against this young man."

Heloise shook her head. "And Leonie's just as dead set on him."

"Has she spoken about persuading him to see the light?" Miss Julie inquired.

"Not exactly," Heloise said. "I tried to get her to say that she'd

insist, at least, on his making the right promises. But she wouldn't even do that."

Miss Julie was taken aback. "If she's not going to insist," she said, "I wash my hands of it all right here and now. There's no good encouraging her if she isn't going to save this young man's soul. If it's going to mean the loss of hers—Do you know what Susan Williams told me this morning? That Leonie was seen bathing at the Isle of Palms with that young man and without any stockings."

"What!"

"No stockings," Miss Julie repeated grimly. "That's how the tale goes at present. Very soon it will be that she was stark naked. And after that—"

"If Henri hears this it will break his heart," Heloise said. "He'll never get over it."

"You'd better break it to him, Heloise. Tell him it's a lie. Make Leonie deny it categorically. Categorically," she repeated. "I expect to make short work of anybody that tries to mention it to me. Of course we know what goes on at those Isle of Palms parties. The gyrls take cigarettes from the young men and smoke them." She flung up her hands in despair. "Another thing. They say that Leonie is going to join St. Michael's Church so she can go there with him."

But Heloise laughed at that.

"Oh, don't you be too sure," Miss Julie said. "Gyrls are carried away sometimes. This would be the last straw. There has never been an apostate in our family. Even Henry O'Donnell never actually left the Church."

"I still don't believe it."

Miss Julie shrugged. "They've made a regular yellow-back out of this affair already. They say Leonie is infatuated with this young man and that you and Henri can't do a thing with her . . . and that old scandalmonger will embroider it all until Leonie hasn't got a shred of reputation left. I'd like to have a good millstone to hang around her neck," said Miss Julie vehemently, "and I wouldn't be slow about doing it, either."

Heloise did not have a chance to discuss the matter with Leonie, for Leonie did not return until dinnertime. While Henri was hinting gloomily that now people would say he was unable to send

Leonie to Virginia, Heloise thought of what she would say to the girl, and when he had left, she went to Leonie's room. Leonie was resting—from what, Heloise had no idea.

"Leonie, what's this I hear about you swimming with that young man with your stockings off?"

Leonie turned very red and her face was stiff with embarrassment.

"Is there any harm in that?" she inquired.

"How can you ask that? You know it's highly improper. It's immodest and unmaidenly."

"Lots of people go swimming without stockings," Leonie argued.

"Not decent people. Don't you realize that this boy will have no respect for you whatever if you do things like that? And don't you know that people will build up this gossip until they are saying that you went in swimming with nothing on?"

"I didn't think there was any harm in it," Leonie insisted. "My Lord, I get tired of having everything I do watched and reported on! I've got a good mind to go away. There must be some way I could earn a living."

"You try it sometime and see how you like it," Heloise said. "Now, this is no joking matter. Your uncle is going to be terribly upset. I should think you'd have a little more consideration for his feelings. He's been good to you."

"I have my own life to live," Leonie said.

"And you're starting out to make a mess of it. Child, can't you understand? It won't be worth living if people get to talking about you. Another thing. It's the talk now that you are thinking of giving up your faith, so that you can go to St. Michael's with Lincoln Calvert."

"Well, I never!" Leonie said. "Here I go in to visit the church with him because neither of us had seen it for years and it gets around that I'm going to be a Protestant. I tell you, I won't stand for this sort of thing much longer. I *will* run away," she said furiously.

"Don't talk silly. But just get it into your head that you're going to have trouble if you go on. Don't you realize that people think now that you're engaged? And if nothing comes of it that they'll say you were thrown over?"

Leonie looked worried. "But—" she said.

"But nothing. Now the first thing to do is to convince your uncle that this story about swimming barelegged is a lie. You tell him that

it simply isn't true and you'll have to get that boy to back you up."

"I don't like lying," Leonie said.

"Well, you've got to lie in this case. I'll tell him about it and then he'll ask you. Tell him it's a lie, and keep your temper."

"You don't mean you think he'll go after Lincoln about it?"

"He might. But probably he'll believe you. I don't look forward to telling him." She shook a warning finger at Leonie. "And don't do such a thing again, you hear me?"

"Oh, Lord," she said to herself when she was in her own room, "there's going to be trouble. Why do we have something like this to contend with in our old age?"

Chapter Twenty-Seven

HELOISE WAITED THAT evening until Leonie was out visiting.

"Poor child," she said, "she's distressed. No wonder. There never was a nicer girl than Leonie, and now some mean person has gone and spread a story about her."

Henri, deep in the new Victor monthly record supplement, did not take this in, for he was memorizing the description of a new disc by Marcel Journet.

"I say," Heloise repeated, when he looked up blankly, "Leonie's very unhappy because someone has spread a mean story about her. Of course it's quite untrue."

"Untrue? Of course," Henri said. He looked at her and the light of reason returned to his gaze. "What's untrue, you say?" He closed the booklet regretfully, holding a finger in it to mark the place.

"Someone," Heloise told him, "has spread the story that Leonie was in swimming with that Calvert boy without stockings."

"What?" Henri roared, scattering the record lists and his pen every which way. "Who says so?"

"I don't know who says so," Heloise admitted. "Cousin Julie heard it from Miss Susan Williams."

"I always knew that young blagyard would—" Henri began, and then he stopped. "You've asked Leonie about this?"

"She says it's a lie."

"Of course it's a lie. Leonie wouldn't do anything like that."

Heloise was relieved. She took this naive declaration of faith without blinking. "I hope you won't say anything to her about it, Brother. The child feels bad, and she's so sensitive—"

Henri pounded the table. "Say anything to her? I most certainly do intend to say something to her. I mean to get to the bottom of this."

"But if the child says she didn't—"

"What's that got to do with it?" Henri roared. "Her reputation is ruined, isn't it? How long before they'll say that she was in swim-

ming naked, do you suppose? I always knew that boy would bring disgrace and trouble on us."

"Brother," Heloise said, "I'm not deaf."

Henri glared at her. "I knew this," he went on, tragically. "I foresaw it that afternoon on King Street when I saw that blagyard and his uncle. Now Leonie will never be able to hold up her head in public again.

"Of course we'll have to go away. I'll try to find a job somewhere. It's not easy at my age. I wish the code duello was still recognized. I'd call that young scoundrel out, that's what I'd do."

"Brother," Heloise said, "you're taking on for nothing. In the first place, it's not the young man's fault. It's just somebody who hates Leonie and wants to do her harm—"

"I'll track that story down to the person who's supposed to have seen her," Henri raged, "and I'll bring suit against whoever it was for defamation of character."

"I think the right thing to do is ignore it. You don't want to call attention to it."

Henri dropped his plan for litigation. "No, no," he said. "We'll go away. Anywhere, as long as no one knows us there."

Heloise let him rant for a while. He repeated his threats; reaffirmed his intention of transferring them all to some other city; said that he would "call that young man out." After that, he swore again that he would get to the bottom of this. He predicted several times that Leonie's reputation would be ruined. And then, finally, he said that he would speak to her.

After which he returned to his record booklet and read about the new record by Journet. Then, with mournful humor, he hummed the "Slander Aria" from *The Barber of Seville*.

"It's awful for that child," he told Heloise.

"She's very dissatisfied," Heloise said. "She says that nothing she can do isn't talked about. They also say," she continued to break the news easily, "that she's going to renounce her faith to marry Lincoln Calvert, because they were seen going into St. Michael's together to have a look at it."

"She went into St. Michael's with him?"

"Yes."

Henri groaned. "One thing after another. I swear, it's too much for one man to stand. And the worst of it is that I almost believe

Leonie is so infatuated with that fellow that she'd become a Protestant to please him. I'll have to have a talk with her."

"If I were you," Heloise said, "I'd wait and think it over. You know how tempery she is."

"How on earth am I going to control her if I don't point out to her that she's doing wrong?" Henri demanded. "Well, I must say, a lot of it is your fault. We could have avoided all this if you hadn't persuaded me in the first place not to say anything against her going with that rake."

"Yes, you were very silent about it," Heloise said.

"Well, there's only one thing left to do," Henri said. "I'm going to have a talk with that young scoundrel and point out what his duty is."

"Brother, you can't be planning to do anything so foolish. Unless you mean that you're going to ask what are his intentions," Heloise said, lapsing for a moment into her old jocular manner.

Henri looked at her with stately disdain.

"I do not intend to do anything so common," he said. "I am going to ask him, if he has any instincts of gentlemanliness, which I doubt, to leave Leonie alone."

"Leonie will never forgive you."

"If he's got any shreds of decency, he won't tell her. I won't, and I hope you won't."

"I think you're making a bad mistake."

"I'll take the responsibility," Henri said. "It's too late to repair the real damage, but it may not be too late to save that innocent child from more."

He was singularly calm the rest of the evening, did not mention the matter at breakfast, from which Leonie was absent, and did not even bring it up at dinnertime. Leonie was uneasy; she had expected a scolding. She was afraid that he might tackle Lincoln about it, and she dreaded that. It would make her ridiculous, and it might drive Lincoln away.

For she had to admit that Lincoln was a cautious suitor. Leonie was not in too great a hurry—but she had begun to feel that he was falling into the all-too-familiar pattern of Charleston swains and preparing to take her for granted for an unlimited time.

"I wish women had a little more pride," she said to herself, "and I wish I had more experience with men."

She waited fearfully for something to happen.

But time wore on. Henri, after his first outburst, had felt sorrowful and hurt. "I love that child above everything else on earth," he said to himself many times, "and you'd think she'd try to do something that would please me." He was humiliated, too, every time he stepped out in the street, to think that people were whispering about his niece as he passed. He determined to attack young Calvert when he got the chance.

But if Leonie was inexperienced in the management of young men, Henri was equally inexperienced in talking to young men who were interested in her. Moreover, he was peculiarly circumscribed. He could not visit the home of Colonel Calvert in the hope of finding the young man there; even this family crisis could not bring him to do that. And there was no convenient way for him to go over to the farm.

But he watched Lincoln on the young man's next visits, and to his relief it seemed to him that the young man, unless he was a consummate actor or prodigiously endowed with self-control, seemed much more like a good friend than a panting suitor.

He mentioned this encouraging conclusion to Heloise.

"Maybe you're right," Heloise said. "Certainly Leonie don't feel very happy. It seems to me that she's very quiet."

Henri felt a brief tug of pity for the girl. Of course he wanted Leonie to be happily settled in life, but he felt selfishly gratified at the thought that the danger of losing her was not too immediate. If he could offer her some kind of change, that might be well, and he owed her, undoubtedly, the equivalent of that trip to Virginia. But other trips, which would include hotel bills and such extras, were too expensive.

He observed Leonie closely. She did not seem so saucy, she slept late and did a good deal of reading, and several times she had some of the more pious girls of her circle in for visits.

Despite the feeling of relief, the certainty that Leonie was being made unhappy made him angry, and he determined to have that talk with Lincoln Calvert. But he put it off. A chance meeting ended his shilly-shallying.

He was out for a Sunday afternoon stroll and was going along Ashley Avenue when a commotion forced him to look behind. He recognized the disreputable Ford, spattered with mud and with a

cracked windshield. It drew up with a screech of brakes and the idling motor continued to cough like a consumptive.

"Take you anywhere, Mr. Lemay?" Lincoln Calvert inquired, leaning out.

"No, thank you," Henri replied, with an eloquent look at the car.

"Like to see my farm, sir?"

"You're very kind," Henri replied, not without a touch of sarcasm, "but I don't think I have the time."

"How is Leonie, sir?"

Henri had been certain that Lincoln's interest in Leonie was dwindling, but the question had an odd sound—as if this boy wanted to elicit some information about Leonie's feelings. Perhaps, even, to ask him to help in easing his way out of the situation. It made Henri's effervescent blood boil.

"Leonie is fine, thank you," he said, looking fixedly at Lincoln.

"I'm glad to hear that," Lincoln said. Some kind of youthful awkwardness seemed to make it difficult for him to get away.

"Why, he's only a boy," Henri thought, and he wondered why he had put off having this discussion. "If you can drive up the road a little," he said, "I'd like to have a talk with you."

Lincoln flushed darkly, but he flung open the door. Henri climbed in, found a place among the junk on the floor for his feet, slammed the door, which did not fasten very firmly, and sat back with a jerk as the decrepit car started in a cloud of violet smoke.

"Now, young man, don't scorch," Henri admonished.

Lincoln laughed. "No fear of that, Mr. Lemay," he said. "This old flivver would fall apart if I went real fast."

Henri grunted.

"I've offered to teach Leonie to drive," Lincoln said.

"I hope she'll be careful," Henri replied. He was grateful for this opening. "When a child is all two old people have to live for, they can't help worrying about her. And Leonie is impulsive—very impulsive. She doesn't always foresee the consequences of what she does."

Lincoln kept his eyes doggedly ahead. "I think a lot of Leonie," he admitted. "She's—well, she's good company. She knows a lot more than most girls."

"We have tried to give Leonie a good education," Henri said proudly. "We want her to make the most of herself."

"You know, Mr. Lemay," Lincoln said, "Leonie and I have got a great deal in common. We've both been away and we have a different way of looking at things. Charleston is a funny place, Mr. Lemay."

"I don't see anything 'funny' about it. I wouldn't care to live anywhere else."

"I didn't mean to criticize. But people here are very clannish. Leonie and I, when we were just little kids at school, felt different. There was—well, Leonie didn't know any of the other children and there was my uncle."

Henri felt embarrassed.

"A lot of people think my uncle is a freak and a pariah," Lincoln said. "He's always said and done what he thought was right, and I respect him for it."

Henri nodded. After all, he liked young people to have the proper respect for their elders. But as he looked across at Hampton Park, he was reminded of his hero, whom Colonel Calvert had criticized, and his approval diminished.

"Ah—about Leonie," he said abruptly. "We don't want her to be made unhappy. And let me tell you this, young man: You're proceeding in the best possible way to make her unhappy. You may not have considered it, because young men don't think of things like that, but everything a gyirl does affects her future. People are saying that you and Leonie go everywhere together, and you know what construction they put on that."

"I suppose they say we're engaged," Lincoln said, not very cheerfully, as if he expected Henri to question him closely.

"Which is impossible, of course," Henri said.

"How is it impossible, Mr. Lemay?"

Henri regarded him sternly. "Because in the first place, Leonie is a Catholic," he said. "In the second place, you have never consulted me about paying attention to her, which is the first thing a young gentleman does when he expects to pay court to a lady."

Lincoln looked angry but he did not reply.

"And," Henri said, "because you know very well, young man, that you have a long way ahead of you before you're in a position to offer marriage to anybody."

"My uncle," Lincoln said, "once told me that the two great faults

of the South are being too impulsive and taking too long to deliberate."

This confirmed Henri's opinion that the Colonel was insane.

"I don't see how they can both be true at the same time," he remarked.

"At any rate," Lincoln said, "there are too many lifetime engagements in Charleston, and I can understand that you want to protect Leonie from one."

Henri kept his temper at this personal thrust.

"Yes," he replied sharply, "I do."

"Any personal objection to me?"

Really, Henri thought, there was no understanding these Calverts. Here was this boy who had mocked his singing—at the instigation of his uncle, of course—and offended him by kissing his niece—asking right out about his feelings. Such directness was hard to deal with.

"I know nothing of your personal habits," he said lamely. "But I feel sure you would not care to make the changes in your—er—view-point that would be necessary. Even if there were any possibility of having to consider them."

"You mean agreeing to be married by a priest and promising to bring the children up as Catholics," Lincoln said.

"Exactly. It may seem very narrow to you, but that's the requirement Catholics make."

Lincoln said slowly, "If you'll excuse me for saying it, I don't sympathize with that point of view."

"It is not of the slightest interest to me," Henri said, swelling with anger, "whether you agree with it or not. I consider your company a distinct disadvantage to my niece. I don't want it said that you had the chance to marry her and didn't. That is very bad for a young lady's reputation and prospects. I'd think, at your age, you would know that."

"Mr. Lemay," Lincoln said, "I didn't mean to be inconsiderate."

"Then," Henri told him, "I think the thing for you to do is to stop being inconsiderate. I am not anxious for my niece to be married. But I don't want her opportunities spoiled. Now you have it."

Lincoln was just young enough to be overawed by this talking-to, but he stood his ground.

"If I suddenly stop going with Leonie," he said, "people will say that I jilted her, anyway."

"You could let her make the break," Henri said. "Any gentleman would."

"That would hurt her feelings," Lincoln objected. "I know it doesn't do any good to say this, Mr. Lemay, but I hadn't really made up my mind about Leonie, one way or the other. If I told her that I thought we were becoming too close, that would make me look foolish, too."

"Damn it, sir," Henri said, "I'm not considering your feelings. A lady's feelings come first."

Lincoln slowed the jerky progress of the Ford and turned it halfway around. He backed, jerked forward, and drew up at the side of the roadway.

"I'll do whatever you say, Mr. Lemay," he said with cold politeness. "I'll see Leonie less and I'll try not to make her conspicuous."

"You've already created a situation," Henri said, "which is embarrassing for everybody. I think that would be the way of doing the least damage."

They rode back in silence until they were within a few blocks of the house.

"Do you want me to take you right to the house, sir, or drop you off a little distance away so that Leonie won't know about this meeting?"

"My comings and goings, sir," Henri replied, "are not subject to anyone's approval. Please put me down at my front door."

"Certainly, sir," Lincoln said.

But Henri weakened.

"Just a minute," he said. "Maybe you're right about that. It would be just as well for Leonie to know nothing about this conversation. I'll get out here."

Lincoln ground to a stop and Henri alighted.

"Good-day, sir," he said formally, and strode away.

"That young cur," he muttered. "Insolent, like all the Calverts." But he felt guilty, as if he had betrayed Leonie.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

ALTHOUGH HIS CONSCIENCE hurt him, Henri struggled hard to convince himself that he had acted for the best. He saw no alteration in Leonie; if anything, she seemed more cheerful.

"She's getting over that foolish infatuation," he assured himself. "I always knew she had a lot of good sense. I wish I could send her to New York or something like that. It would help her to get over it completely."

And then came a week in which, he realized, Lincoln Calvert had not been once to the house. He pointed this out to Heloise.

"It looks as if our worries were over," he said.

"Don't you be too sure. I heard Leonie say he was very busy."

"Maybe," Henri suggested, unable to resist trying the thin ice, "he must have realized that he has no chances of marrying and that the gentlemanly thing to do is not to keep on paying advances to a gyrl and put her in a false position."

"If he figured that out for himself," Heloise said, "he's a very remarkable young man. I wouldn't count on it if I were you."

"I am counting on it," Henri said. "And a good thing, too. No more gossip. Leonie had a close shave about that business of swimming without her stockings."

Heloise did not tell him that, according to Miss Julie, the legend was still very much alive. She did not feel easy about Leonie. But she was unprepared for the new sensation, which Miss Julie transmitted a day or so later.

"Georgie Peters," said Miss Julie, "tells me that everybody says now that Henri has asked that Calvert boy what his intentions were and has driven him off."

"It's news to me," Heloise said. "He's been very busy seeing to his farm."

"They went for a ride in that coffee-grinder the young man drives

around in," said Miss Julie, "and they drove up the road and back again." She named the day and the hour.

"Henri was out for a walk that day," Heloise said.

"Well, if it's true, it's just too bad," Miss Julie said. "I've done my best to deny it. I said it was pure nonsense, and that if Henri went riding at all it was for pleasure. Not that there could be much pleasure in riding around in one of those contraptions."

Heloise said that she would ask Henri at dinner. When Leonie was upstairs, she did.

"Why, yes, I had a talk with the boy," Henri said, quailing a bit under Heloise's glance. "We met by accident, and I told him a few things. He said he wasn't really serious about Leonie and he admitted that I was right."

"You'll be glad to know that your meeting is being talked about everywhere."

"Who told you?"

"Cousin Julie. They say you've asked the young man his intentions and have driven him off."

"They'll have to talk, that's all," Henri said.

"I only hope Leonie doesn't find out about it."

"If he has a shred of manhood left," Henri said, "he won't tell her."

"No, but somebody else will."

"I'll take care of Leonie when the time comes."

"Oh, yes, you will. You'll smooth everything over," Heloise said.

"You talk as if I had done something wrong," Henri snapped. "Somebody had to put a stop to this dragging of Leonie's name in the mud."

But, although he would not have admitted it on the rack, he felt uneasy, and he waited for Leonie to erupt. Of course, he would open Leonie's eyes when he told her that the boy had admitted that he wasn't serious about her; he had told Heloise this twice and had ended up by believing it himself. He would help to cure her of the hurt by sending her away somewhere to have a good time.

It was at this time that Leonie informed him that the McDevitts were really coming to Charleston.

"About the first of October," she said.

"Coming to Charleston, eh? Too bad we haven't got room for them. I hope you asked them anyway."

"I did nothing of the kind," Leonie said. "What's the use of pretending? And suppose they had accepted?"

"Oh, they wouldn't accept," Henri assured her.

"They might have. They don't know we haven't got a mansion with pillars in front. When you're rich you think everybody else is rich, too."

"Still, it would only have been polite. . . . Where are they going to stay?"

"I recommended Miss Antoinette's."

If she had expected her uncle to cut a buck and wing over this she was disappointed.

"Leonie," he said, "I don't think you should have done that. It's a great responsibility. It may be embarrassing. You know Antoinette is very particular about the people she will accept as guests. If she finds out this man is a gambler . . ."

"Well, I like that," Leonie said, "I try to do that old soul a good turn and you tell me she's particular about the people she takes in. The McDevitts know how to behave themselves. They've been everywhere. And Mr. McDevitt doesn't go around in a check suit and yellow shoes."

"Well, I'll mention it to Antoinette," Henri said. "I'm sure she'll be grateful. I just thought it might be embarrassing to you if she didn't find room for them."

"I made it sound as attractive as I could," Leonie said. "I told them she was a member of one of the founding families and that the house was about three hundred years old, which of course it isn't—"

"Of course not," Henri said. "Charleston wasn't founded until 1683."

"—and I told them it was a distinguished old place, where Washington and Lafayette and Beauregard had all been to visit."

"Mr. Calhoun was there, too," Henri said.

"Maybe I mentioned him," Leonie said. "At any rate, they were tickled to death with the idea, and Mrs. McDevitt is going to write to Miss Antoinette."

"It will be nice for you, having them here," Henri said.

Heloise entered at that moment. "Well, is your uncle pleased with the news?" she asked.

"No he isn't. He doesn't think my friends are good enough for Miss Antoinette's venerable mansion."

Henri frowned. "I explained that they might not quite meet with Antoinette's approval," he said.

"Well, of course we must be particular who profanes the Fielding House," Heloise said. "Why don't you have them send their family tree along with their letter? Or ask them here."

"That's what Uncle said I should have done."

"Of course, we could put them up," Heloise agreed. "Mr. McDevitt could sleep with you, Brother, and Mrs. McDevitt with me, and the girls could sleep three in a bed with Leonie."

"Oh, go on with your joking," Henri said.

"We'll have them for dinner," Heloise said, "and we must introduce them to the O'Donnell family. And of course they must meet the Bishop. Dinner for all those people will cost a pretty penny."

"I wonder what they'll think of Cousin Julie," Leonie said.

"Your Cousin Julie," Heloise said tartly, "is good enough for anybody we know."

"Well, I've heard Uncle criticize her."

"That's just between us," Henri said. "Within a family, it can be admitted that a person has peculiarities."

"She gave me a prayer for peace," Leonie said.

"I hope you say it regularly," Heloise told her.

"Naturally I don't like to think of this war," Leonie said. "But everybody's being so bitter about it, it seems to me. What business of ours is it if the imperial interests of England and France clash with Germany's?"

"I don't know where you get such ideas," Henri said, although he knew very well that they came from Lincoln Calvert, and he was disappointed to think that the influence was still enduring. "I'm very sorry, Leonie, if your friends are misleading you into pro-Germanism. Personally, I have given up all German music as a gesture. I am not going to sing any songs by German composers. Not even in English."

"The composers didn't start this war," Leonie said.

"That doesn't enter into the matter," Henri said. "We ought not to encourage the Germans. We are also thinking of not buying anything from the German grocers, either. It's said about them that they are all violently pro-German."

"You can't blame them for that," Leonie said. "And most of them have been here for generations. It doesn't seem fair to me."

"You're very young," Henri said. "But I can tell you, child, that reading about this Louvain business has brought back to my mind all the atrocities of that fiend Sherman—"

"Now, Uncle," Leonie protested, "we aren't going into that again, are we? Besides, you know very well we brought it on ourselves."

"Leonie," Heloise interrupted, "don't tease your uncle any more."

"I don't want to argue," Leonie said, "but after all I have my convictions and they're very important to me."

"Convictions are all right," Henri said, "as long as you don't go upsetting things with them."

But Henri was disappointed in Leonie. Not only could she not see that a very special kind of person was required for residence in the Fielding House—here she was, allowing herself to be infected with that young ruffian's ideas about everything. Or rather, his villainous uncle's ideas.

Perhaps he ought to warn Antoinette immediately so that she could have an excuse ready when those McDevitts applied for rooms. On the other hand, she needed the money. If he dissuaded her from taking these people, he would deprive her of necessary income.

"Things never work out," he grumbled, and he began to murmur the line from *The Trumpeter of Saekkingen*, "How badly is the course of life adjusted," when he realized that it was a German song and broke it off.

Nevertheless, the course of life *was* badly adjusted.

Chapter Twenty-Nine

HE FOUND ANTOINETTE suffering a little from the dampness.

"Summer goes faster and faster every year," she said querulously.

"I have some news for you," Henri told her, and he reported the McDevitts' laudable appreciation to be sheltered under her roof.

"Oh, dear, Virginians," said Antoinette fretfully. "They're not quite like our own people. But on the other hand I suppose they're bound to be better than Northerners. Henri, what do you know about these people? They don't seem to have one of the old Virginia names."

"Leonie and the elder daughter were friends at college," Henri said. "I met the father and mother when I was in Baltimore. I thought they were very nice. They are certainly well-off. I believe Mr. McDevitt is interested in—ah—sport. He owns a horse or two, and they have a winter home in Richmond and a summer place in the mountains. They have traveled a lot and they are people of the world."

It was the best he could say for the McDevitts, and even so he felt that he was doing them a great deal more than justice.

Antoinette sipped her sherry thoughtfully. "Ah—I suppose, since the daughter went to college with Leonie, that they are Catholics?" she inquired.

Henri bridled a little. "Does that make any difference?"

"Of course not," Antoinette said. "You forget that Bishop England was a visitor to our home in my grandfather's day. I was simply regretting that I would be unable to offer them our pew in St. Michael's. That is to be one of the great attractions I offer to guests."

"Perhaps your other guests will appreciate the pew at St. Michael's."

"I have an application from some people from Massachusetts," Antoinette said. "I've made inquiries but none of our friends have ever heard of them. Their name was Saltonstall. It doesn't sound

like a good old name, does it? They own mills, I suppose, and no doubt their money came from blackbirding."

"I never heard of them either," Henri said.

"It's so hard to know whom you're taking under your roof," Antoinette said. "I suppose I'd better write and tell them my rates are twelve dollars a week for each room. I'm really only charging ten."

"That might work, if you're sure they're undesirable," Henri agreed.

"I'm going to count on your help in showing people around the city," Antoinette told him. "Of course, I shall introduce them, if they are presentable, to my cousins and the rector. But perhaps you could show them the Battery and Legare Street and tell them the history."

"Of course. I'll be only too delighted to."

"And since these McDevitt people are friends of Leonie's," Antoinette pursued, "naturally you'll want to escort them."

"Certainly. We'll have them for dinner, and I'm sure Henry O'Donnell will."

"They will want to see Magnolia Gyardens," said Antoinette, "and Summerville, though it isn't much to see in the wintertime. And Fort Sumter and Mr. Calhoun's tomb in St. Philip's churchyard. I dare say they have nothing of the kind in Virginia except Mount Vernon, and certainly there is nothing in Massachusetts to compare with them. When that dear Mr. Henry James was here he said as much. And I must get a new copy of Mrs. Ravenel's book. Mine is just worn out. I do wish," Antoinette went on, "that I hadn't got rid of our joggling board; I'd like them to enjoy it. Ours was never the same after Cousin Hester sat on it."

Henri smiled, and privately wondered if Antoinette would tell her guests about Cousin Hester's *embonpoint* and the fact that the front door had to be taken down to permit the egress of her coffin. "I don't think," he said, "if they've never known the pleasure of a joggling board, that they'll actually miss it."

"Remember, Henri, how you and I used to sit on it out in the gyarden? It was almost forty years ago," Antoinette said softly.

"Of course I remember," Henri said, "but it's hard to believe that it was forty years ago, when you've changed so little."

"Good gracious, Henri. I'm getting too old for compliments like

that," Antoinette said with a simper. "I didn't think, in those days, that some day I'd be letting rooms in my house."

"Now, Antoinette, you don't want to be foolish about it. It's a perfectly honorable way of adding to your income."

"I hate to think, though, of what poor Papa would have thought. He was such a stickler for everything that kept a person's proper standing in the world. He always called it keeping your head up. He wrote in his journal once, 'Not poverty, which is honorable; not hardship, which is good for the character; but bowing to them, is disgraceful.' I have always treasured that sentiment. It seems to me to typify Papa."

Henri's memory of Mr. Fielding was of a fussy gentleman with whiskers, who wore a flower in his buttonhole and talked of the good old days when a man who was rude would be called out to the field of honor to account for it, and one of whose last acts was to register his opposition to the Exposition as un-Charlestonian. Although fifty himself, when Mr. Fielding died, Henri always had felt like a boy in his presence, and had feared for thirty years that Mr. Fielding was going to ask him his intentions. It had taken him a long time to realize that Mr. Fielding's lackadaisical attitude had been due solely to the fact that he clung to his daughter and had no desire whatever to see her married, and that his courtship of Antoinette had been encouraged because Mr. Fielding had felt that he would never be able to marry her. He had been used to keep other suitors—more likely to be able to ask Antoinette to name the day—at a distance.

But under the influence of a bit more sherry than usual he felt himself warming toward Mr. Fielding. If Mr. Fielding had lived longer, they would have understood each other at last.

"Men like that are not common nowadays," he said. "I always felt as if Mr. Fielding was a sort of elder brother or uncle."

"He was very much attached to you, Henri. He said it was a pity you didn't have the chance to employ your talents somewhere else."

Henri did not notice the ambiguity of this remark.

"We belonged to a very unfortunate generation," Henri said. "But we had the benefit of something—I don't know what it is—that's entirely lacking now."

"And this terrible war across the ocean," Antoinette said. "Only those of us who have been through it know what to expect. Mr. Davidson told me it might affect the price of cotton favorably but

I felt that I shouldn't rejoice at that. He also said it might make it difficult to get nitrates."

"Naturally, such a world catastrophe can't help affecting us in one way or other," Henri said pontifically. "But it won't last long."

"The rector offered prayers for peace last Sunday," Antoinette said, as if that would go a long way toward confirming the predictions of the experts.

In a long lifetime, Henri had never been able to persuade himself that Episcopalians really believed in the efficacy of prayer. Living through the Civil War as a boy had done much to confirm him, too, in the illicit opinion that God was on the side of the strongest army. He tried to rid himself of the shadow of doubt, by a strong affirmation.

"I believe in prayer, firmly," he said. "Not all of my prayers have been answered, but I have tried to feel always that they were not really for the right things."

"I have always felt, too," Antoinette said, "that God knows best."

"Amen," Henri said.

"Ahmen," Antoinette corrected. "I mean to ask His guidance in this matter of accepting those people from Massachusetts. I feel a responsibility toward Charleston in the matter. As for those Virginia people, I think I'll consider your recommendation entirely sufficient."

Which, Henri thought as he walked home, shifted the responsibility to him. He had known that it would be so.

He did not report Antoinette's coolness toward the McDevitts with entire accuracy.

"Antoinette will be pleased to have those people," he told Heloise.

"I should think so. All that money would make anybody welcome."

"Now, Sister," Henri protested, "I know you think Antoinette is snobbish, but after all there are certain considerations involved when you take strangers into an old and distinguished house."

"One consideration involved," Heloise said, "is whether or not they'll be comfortable. From what I know of that house—"

Henri dismissed this with a wave of the hand. "They are the ones on trial," he said, "not the house."

"Oh."

"We must try to show them what Charleston really is like," Henri

went on. "I am going to take care of guiding them to the places of historical interest."

"That will make up for a lot of things," Heloise said.

Miss Julie caught his eye at Mass next day and he walked home with her. As they passed New Street, he indicated Antoinette's house and remarked that Leonie's friends from Virginia were going to stay there. He told her out of consideration for her own vanity about being informed, and awaited some unconventional observations about the comforts of the Fielding House.

"Well, she's got plenty of room," was all Miss Julie said. "I do feel a little for her, taking in strangers like that. It isn't the kind of thing our people are used to. I hope she smothers her pride. Pride will kill a lot of people."

Henri nodded.

"What are they coming for?" Miss Julie inquired. "There must be some reason."

"I believe there's some sort of business involved. But they want to see Charleston. I'm going to show them around the interesting places."

"You'll want to show them the churches," Miss Julie said. "The Cathedral and St. Mary's and the grave of the DeGrasse daughters. St. Joseph's and St. Peter's too," she added, listing the Catholic places of worship.

"And St. Michael's and St. Philip's," Henri said.

"If they have time and want to bother," Miss Julie said, quickly dismissing these two merely Episcopalian edifices. "I suppose they might want to see Mr. Calhoun's gravestone. You ought to show them where Four Mile House was where the murder was that time, and the house where that scamp shot Colonel Dawson. And the Bishop's House. I can't think offhand of anything else, except Magnolia Gyardens, and they won't be here at the right time to see that."

"But the old houses—" Henri objected.

Miss Julie waved her hand airily. "Oh, if they want to see that sort of folderol," she said. "I suppose they can't help seeing the Citadel since it's right there on King Street and they might want to look at the cannon on the Battery. They might like a trip to Fort Sumter, too. But that's about all."

"I thought maybe you could tell me something about the old

families," Henri said, although he did not feel that anyone could tell him much.

Miss Julie wagged her head. "I should say I could," she declared with grim enthusiasm. "Just send them to me. I could tell them a few things that the families themselves have forgotten, or that they'd like to."

"They are visitors, Cousin Julie. They won't need to know that kind of thing."

"I suppose you're right," Miss Julie admitted. "Well, then, you can tell them all the usual nonsense about who was who in the Revolution—and of course you can tell them all about the War—How is that child getting along?"

"She seems to be all right."

"Still water runs deep," said Miss Julie, but she did not elaborate. "I was wondering if I could get her interested in collecting for those poor Belgian children."

Henri shrank at the idea.

"I'm not sure she's fitted for that."

"Hm," said Miss Julie. "It's charity, and I don't know that anyone is too good for works of charity. And the greatest of these, you know." She took out the little canister with the slit in the top. "I haven't filled it yet," she said.

Henri felt uneasy. He was not in a position to contribute to the relief of the Belgians, and he did not like to say so. Miss Julie, however, put the box away without embarrassing him.

"Of course I don't ask relatives," she said. "Except Henry O'Donnell. I made him cough up a dollar, as Joe would say." She chuckled at this triumph. "And I added a little to it myself. I asked for lagniappe, the way they do in New Orleans, every time I bought anything, and then I figured out the difference and put what I saved in the box. And when the little fellows come back from that godless place in the country, I expect to get a few pennies from them. They ought to learn to give early in life."

She prepared to go in at the gate. "I'll talk to Leonie about it when I see her," she said, oblivious of the fact that Henri had expressed disapproval.

Without arguing, Henri lifted his hat and walked away. He did not want Leonie going around holding out a little box to strangers.

He did not like these pushing ways. Besides, he thought, if Leonie was being talked about, she wouldn't want to bring any more notoriety on herself. The thought of Leonie's damaged reputation made him groan. For the first time in his life, lately, he had felt uncomfortable in his own home city.

Chapter Thirty

THE AUTUMN WAS beginning, with overtones of summer that still lingered. Straw hats had been put away, boats had been hauled up, there had been a mild equinoctial storm, the fall crops had grown. Children were persecuting new teachers and were roller-skating on the miles of new asphalt paving. Miss Genevieve McMann's protest concerning the assessment for this improvement in front of her house had been duly considered and rejected.

The Board of Aldermen had finally passed the buck in the case of the Southall legacy providing for the John Brown memorial by referring it to the committee on public conveniences. Some lawmakers, after a trip to study government in other cities, had expended more than their allotment but had hinted that the expedition had been worth the difference; and they had been so impressed by the cleanliness of eating places in foreign climes that they had moved for an ordinance requiring the inspection of all lunchrooms and restaurants in Charleston. The suggestion was generally considered Socialistic.

A gentleman had protested that the carrying-on of the insane patients in the Roper Hospital was disrupting his peace of mind, and another had complained that pools of water gathered after every rain in front of his property. Family debates over the economy and advisability of starting fires were in progress wherever there chanced to be an elderly relative. Certain people were behaving no better than they should have, and due notice was being taken of this perennial feature, although Miss Susan Williams was finding her activity curtailed by a recurrence of lumbago.

Miss Antoinette Fielding, having accepted the application of the McDevitt family, was in a perfect stew of uneasiness over her first paying guests but was happy that the applicants from Massachusetts had turned out to be not only substantial but of the best local standing.

Miss Julie Gerard was busily trying to collect a few coppers here and there for the relief of the Belgians and was put out because Leonie had respectfully declined to participate.

Leonie appeared to be minding her own affairs quite well. There was an occasional visit from Lincoln Calvert, and she went out a good deal. Heloise was busy; and now that the windows were usually closed, the master of the household had resumed full-voice vocalizing to the extreme annoyance of their neighbor to the north and to the occasional amusement of passing groups of young people. He had refused to rejoin the Cathedral choir, but he was sure that he would be urged to perform by the McDevitts and wanted to do himself justice. He had laid out a program, beginning with arias by Handel and Mozart (Handel was really British and Mozart was hardly German at all), some French airs, and popular ballads. He especially meant to raise the roof with "Till the Sands of the Desert Grow Cold."

He was voicing this passionate declaration of eternal fidelity one evening when Leonie, bursting with suppressed rage, charged into the parlor, snatched up a magazine and charged out again, slamming the door and leaving her uncle puzzled.

Shaking his head, Henri went on with the song, but some of the old fire had gone out of him. He feared the worst, and he went back to the kitchen and listened. He heard sounds of throwing and slamming and a not at all ladylike outburst of what sounded, to his keen ear, like denunciation.

Shaken, he returned to his singing, but he had not got very far when Heloise, pale with agitation, came into the room.

"You'll have to come upstairs, Brother," she said. "Leonie is having hysterics."

"Hysterics? Get some smelling salts. A cold cloth. Do something!" Henri barked, racing for the stairs, though totally undecided about what course to pursue if Heloise's diagnosis turned out to be correct, and dismayed to think that the Hughes family, with which the Lemay strain had become mingled by the accident of marriage, had always been a trifle unstable.

He entered Leonie's room without the preliminary of knocking, and was closely followed by Heloise, with the smelling salts.

"What is all this about?" he inquired.

Leonie had flung herself on the bed, face down, and she was

sobbing, half in grief and half in fury. She raised her face from the pillow only long enough to request her uncle to get out.

Heloise put a comforting hand on Leonie's shoulder, which the girl flung off angrily. She then tried applying the smelling salts, which caused Leonie to gasp desperately. But she fought that off too.

"Go on out! Leave me alone! I never want to speak to either of you again!" she shouted.

"But what's the matter?" Henri inquired. "This is no way for a young lady to behave."

Heloise, who had solid foundations of good sense, was not slow to see the futility of such remonstrances. Convinced that Leonie was not having a fit, or likely to faint or become violent, she withdrew the smelling salts, and prepared to withdraw herself.

"Come on out, Brother," she urged. "There's no use trying to talk to her now." And she half-dragged the horrified Henri from the room. Once out in the hallway, she drew him into her room and closed the door.

"This is just a tantrum," she declared. "The less we say to her the sooner we'll find out what it's all about. She just wants to be persuaded to tell us what's the matter."

"But why did she rush into the parlor to snatch that magazine?" Henri demanded. "She didn't want to read it."

"Because she wanted you to know that she was mad about something," Heloise said, "and because you were singing and might not have heard her performance if your own hadn't been interrupted."

"I'm afraid this may be bad for her," Henri protested.

"It's the best thing for her," Heloise said. "Let her cry it out, whatever it is. Thank God it's not summertime, with the windows all open, and thank God Queenie has gone home. She's got too many friends that work for people we know."

"But what is it all about?" Henri inquired. "She's been fairly happy all this time."

"You know very well what it's about," Heloise said. "And don't tell me she's been happy as a lark or anything like it. She's been going around this house like a—" Heloise had no proper simile ready, and she merely shrugged and held up her hands to signify that Leonie had been in a state. "She's been drooping like a weeping willow for weeks," she added, recovering her gift of metaphor. "It's typical of you that you didn't notice it."

Henri felt guilty, but he put on a bold front.

"She'll have to get over it," he said. "Of course I'm sorry for the child. I've watched over her ever since she was a little thing of three and came to us that day with that strange woman—"

"You don't need to go over it. I was there," Heloise said. "As I've told you before, she isn't three now, but nearly twenty-two, and it's not like crying over a broken doll or something like that. Heaven knows I don't want to indulge the gyrl too much, but she's really heartbroken. I suppose I haven't known how to do my duty by her. After all, it's hard to begin parenthood when you're nearly fifty."

"What could you have done about it?" Henri asked.

"I could have brought her up to be a simpering little fool," Heloise said, "and then she wouldn't have been interesting to that young man and this wouldn't have happened."

"There's no use crying over spilt milk," Henri said. "The child is the way she is. . . ." But he sighed heavily. There is always at least one moment when parents look back and wonder what they could have done differently.

The sounds of enraged weeping from Leonie's room were fainter now. Henri rose.

"Leave her alone," Heloise commanded.

"I'm just going downstairs," Henri replied, but he listened at Leonie's door. No sound was audible, and he went downstairs. He did not sing again that evening. Music seemed to him a profanation of Leonie's grief.

He sat with his record catalogues, cursing himself for his interference, cursing fate, and cursing Lincoln Calvert. And after a while he heard Leonie puttering about, running a bath, and finally going to bed.

She did not appear at breakfast. Heloise remarked coolly that she was making the *grasse matinée*, but Henri worried about her all morning through the running fire of Mrs. Emmons' conversation.

"I heard," Mrs. Emmons said, "that Lincoln Calvert was not going around so much with your niece."

"Mrs. Emmons," Henri said, outraged by this prying, "I don't know anything about it, and it won't do you any good to ask me until Doomsday."

Mrs. Emmons looked a trifle abashed, a considerable accomplishment.

"Excuse me," she said.

Henri grunted.

At dinnertime Leonie, pale and wan, sat in dignified silence, and neither Heloise nor Henri ventured any questions. She ate sparingly, and soon asked to be excused.

"Well, we are getting the cold shoulder," Heloise said. "Not a word out of her all morning except yes and no."

This went on for several days, and the house was gloomy. It was a strain to sit tight and say nothing, but the two old people managed it, if somewhat unhappily, and finally were rewarded. For, as Heloise had said, Leonie had to have some audience for her displeasure.

Henri tried to break the ice.

"It will be just two weeks now before your friends come," he said.

"Yes," Leonie said in a toneless voice.

"Whatever's gone wrong," he said, "you must try and get over this fit before that."

Leonie did not reply at all to that and Henri lost patience.

"It does seem to me," he remarked, "that we're entitled to a little common politeness."

Leonie jerked herself erect, and her eyes blazed. "Why can't you leave me alone?" she snapped. "Everybody picks on me from morning till night."

"Leonie—"

"You've ruined my life," Leonie said harshly. "Isn't that enough? Now please leave me alone."

"Brother," Heloise said, "don't ask her any more questions. She doesn't want to tell us anything. After all, it's none of our doing."

"Oh, isn't it?" Leonie demanded. "That's just like the two of you. You meddle with my life and you make me the laughingstock of Charleston and then you say it's none of your doing."

"If it's that young man you're talking about," Henri said, "we always knew he would hurt your feelings sooner or later."

Leonie favored him with a glance of unutterable scorn.

"Of course, I had to be the last one to find it out," she said, angrily. "Everybody else knew that you went riding with him and told him something that—"

Henri avoided her glance. "I told him that he wasn't being fair to you," he said.

"You mean you asked him what his intentions were?" Leonie shouted. "My God!"

"Of course I didn't ask him what his *intentions* were," Henri said. "I knew that he didn't have any prospects of marrying and that he wouldn't do the things you wanted him to do anyway. I could have told you that from the start. And he admitted," Henri added cruelly, "that he wasn't serious."

Leonie's face was white. "You're even more of an old devil than I thought," she said.

"I forbid you to speak to me like that," Henri said. "You're beside yourself." But he was more hurt than angry. This, he thought, was what came of indulgence.

Leonie rose from the table. "Well, Lincoln Calvert won't disturb your sleep any more," she said, bitterly. "I told him enough, I guess. I told him that I wasn't going to be made a fool of before everybody and that I never wanted to see him again and that if he came to the door I wouldn't see him and that he wouldn't be allowed to come in." She stopped for breath. "I'm glad I didn't know just how *humiliating* your talk with him was. Anyway, it's all over. I'll never see him again."

She rushed out sobbing, and although Henri called her back she fled up the stairs.

"Let her go, Brother," Heloise said sadly. "She'll get over it sooner that way."

"That young blagyard," Henri shouted. "I'd like to take a horse-whip to him!"

"Now don't blame the boy. You've got what you wanted."

"He had no right to have anything to do with her in the first place."

"It's all just too bad," Heloise said. "And now the child's heart is broken and she's mortified and miserable. I hope it doesn't turn out like a lot of affairs I could mention."

"What do you mean?" Henri asked.

"Shutting herself up in her room for the rest of her life."

"Oh, Leonie won't do anything like that. She's too full of life and spirits," Henri said, but the very idea sent his heart plunging. Maybe he had been wrong about the whole thing. Maybe he should not have interfered. Was his religion of more importance to him than Leonie?

He was afraid of this thought and tried to dismiss it by making an Act of Faith. Forgetting, or minimizing, his lifelong prejudice against the Calverts, he saw himself as the defender of Leonie's faith, and he clung to the conviction that this was the mainspring of his actions.

He did not see Leonie for several days, for she did not come out while he was in the house. He was wretched, but at times he tried to persuade himself that she would recover from this bitterness. The child had made a mistake—oh, it had been summertime and the change from the regularity of college to the freedom of unlimited leisure. And in the next breath he thought of giving in to her.

Heloise, however, stood squarely behind him.

"There's nothing you can do now," she said. "Leonie will never give in. There's no need for you to try to win her over. And it's too late."

"Who said anything about giving in?" Henri demanded, amazed that Heloise should have read his thoughts so accurately.

"You don't always have to say things," Heloise replied.

"But this can't go on," Henri said.

"Wait and see," Heloise said.

He did not have to wait long. Next day, after dinner, Leonie came downstairs and into the dining room. Henri sprang to his feet. "Leonie," he said joyfully, putting his arms around her. "It's good to—"

But Leonie didn't let him finish. She pushed him away gently, and sat down.

"I've made a decision," she said, "which I think you'll both approve."

"Good," Henri exclaimed. "Good girl. I knew my little Leonie wouldn't keep up this business of hiding away when there's so much to do and see in the world."

"That's right, child," Heloise said. "We're sorry you've been unhappy, but the skies will clear."

Leonie regarded them indulgently.

"I've thought this over for a long time," she said, "and it's not a hasty decision at all. I'm going to become a nun."

Chapter Thirty-One

THERE WAS A stunned silence after Leonie's announcement.

"You're joking, Leonie," Heloise said when she had recovered her breath. She got up and closed the door that led to the kitchen.

"No, I'm not," Leonie said. "I was never more serious in my life."

More silence followed, as was natural, since, next to an avowed determination on the part of any of its members to practise the letter of Christianity, there is nothing so appalling, to an average pious Catholic family, as the decision of one of its daughters to enter the sisterhood.

"It's a very big step to take," Heloise pointed out. "You must be very sure you have a true vocation."

"I'm perfectly sure."

This being as much as Heloise could say without falsifying her own religious professions, she subsided.

"Isn't it possible, Leonie," Henri asked, "that you are mistaking a worldly disappointment—ah—of some kind for a vocation?"

Leonie frowned.

"If you mean I am disappointed about Lincoln Calvert," she said, "that has nothing to do with it. In fact, the way I see it now, that was all just the Lord's way of showing me what I really wanted."

"But you're not strong enough, Leonie," Henri objected.

"I'm perfectly healthy," Leonie said. "What makes you think I'm not strong enough?"

"I suppose you know best," he said feebly. "But, on the other hand, you must be sure you're fitted for the life you'll lead. With your college education they'll never allow you to perform menial duties. They'll insist on you being a teacher, and you've always said that was the last thing you wanted to do on earth."

He thought he had scored a point, but Leonie had not been to college for nothing.

"Of course, I'll do what my superiors advise," she declared.

"Teaching for a living, as the last thing a girl can do, is very different from accepting it as the will of God."

Finally Heloise had to say, "Of course, my dear child, we couldn't think of standing in your way," and Henri had grumbled something of the sort and the matter had rested there. Leonie was not completely certain what order she wished to enter. Her preference at present was for a rule as far removed from the world as possible, and she hinted that absolute seclusion and a vow of perpetual silence would not seem too hard to her. After which she withdrew, rising from the table and walking out with a stride that already suggested, to Henri, the cincture and the veil.

The two old people stared at each other, utterly crushed. This was something they could not fight honestly; it was a sin to oppose a vocation.

"My God!" Henri said.

But Heloise voiced some skepticism.

"I can't think of anyone less fitted for vows of eternal humility and obedience," she said.

"It's tragic, that's what it is, tragic," Henri said. "A living death and I don't care who hears me say it."

"Of course it's probably only spite," Heloise consoled him. "Leonie had this bee in her bonnet once before—"

"I don't think, Sister," Henri corrected her gently, "that you are using quite the right language."

"Well, this idea of a vocation," Heloise said. "She had it before when she was at Memminger School, and some of those girls on the Battery didn't invite her to a party."

"Of course she's doing it to pay me back," Henri said gloomily.

"Maybe after she has served her novitiate she won't care quite so much for the idea," Heloise offered. "But that would be a year or more, and then her chances of finding a husband would be that much poorer."

"Leonie's proud," Henri said. "She's not the kind to change her mind publicly. I think if she ever went as far as serving her novitiate she would never come out."

Heloise looked discouraged.

"We must prepare everybody for it," she said. "After all, it won't do for it to come as too much of a surprise. And I think it would be better if we didn't show that we were against it."

"A living death," Henri muttered again. "Yes, you're right, Sister. We ought to announce it."

"I suppose Cousin Julie will still be up," Heloise said. "I think she ought to be the first one to know about it. Suppose we go over to the O'Donnells' and tell them."

Henri suspected that Heloise, like himself, simply wanted to talk to someone about the matter.

It was not far to the O'Donnells' and Heloise made the best use of the time to rehearse Henri in the way she thought they ought to present the news.

"Let's show them that we're quite resigned," she said. "No criticism of Leonie, mind. And if Henry O'Donnell has any of his irreligious things to say, just for this once don't for Heaven's sake argue with him. He don't mean half of what he says, anyway."

"I think I'm quite able to hold up my end of a conversation," Henri said.

"Yes, Brother, but your feelings are liable to run away with you. Mrs. Harrison's cosmos aren't doing very well. It's really getting chilly these nights."

Henri was reminded by this that he ought to ask Heloise to see to his heavier underwear. It did not, however, seem fitting to discuss unmentionables in the street, and he made a mental note to bring up the subject at a more suitable time.

"There have been no religious vocations in our family that I know of," he said musingly, transferring his thoughts from warm underwear to the heavy garments of the nuns.

"If you leave out Cousin Tessie," Heloise said.

Henri squirmed. The religious excesses of his recently deceased elderly relative were too fresh in his mind for comfort.

"Don't mention it," he said. "I don't even like to think of such things in connection with that poor child."

"It's a pity Leonie hadn't been here during the time Cousin Tessie was carrying on," Heloise said. "It might have kept this from ever coming into her head."

"Has it ever occurred to you," Henri asked, struck by a horrid thought, "that if we tell this to too many people, Leonie will feel obliged to carry out her intention?"

"Well, that has to be considered," Heloise said. "Brother, you are right. I think we might suggest to them all tonight that this is a fam-

ily secret and that we are afraid that—but no, that wouldn't do. We don't want them to think we really oppose it."

"Let's tell them," Henri suggested, "that of course we don't want Leonie to be influenced one way or the other by talk. That won't be saying anything for or against, will it?"

"Maybe you're right. I think that would be a very good way of getting around it. . . . Yes, I'm sure it would."

Music was proceeding from the big sitting room of the O'Donnells' house, and Henri brightened a little at the thought that perhaps he would be asked to sing. While pressing the bell, he mee-mee-meed softly to himself. Heloise turned away to hide a smile.

The door was opened by Betsy, a plain little girl in pigtails, with a huge red bow behind her head, and a scattering of freckles. Her manner was both dignified and cordial.

"Why Cousin Heloise! And Cousin Henri! Everyone will be so glad you came," she said.

"Thank you, dear," Heloise said, giving her a kiss. Henri patted her head kindly. Annette, meanwhile, came bustling into the hallway and gave them the same warm welcome. "But you haven't brought Leonie," she said. "Oh, well, no doubt she's with some boy or other. It will soon be time for Betsy to be courted, I suppose."

This was a rather inauspicious beginning.

"Leonie has her reasons for staying at home," Heloise confided. "We'll tell you all about it."

Confident that the news was of an engagement, and naturally interested, Annette smiled knowingly and led them into the living room. Henry O'Donnell stood hospitably in the doorway. Miss Julie was sitting by the fire with a needle case she had been working on, and the small boys were drawing. At a nod from their mother, they stood respectfully, and the entire family acted as if Heloise and Henri were the most thrilling arrivals in the world.

"Good-evening, Heloise. Good-evening, Henri," said Miss Julie from the fireplace. "You young folks gallivanting around at this time of night?"

Henry O'Donnell, perhaps feeling that this sounded as though Miss Julie meant that the hour was late, hastened to remedy the discourtesy.

"Why, the evening is just beginning," he said, expansively. "Sit

right down by the fire, Miss Heloise. Mr. Henri, here's a chair for you to warm your feet."

Betsy looked doubtfully at the new piano and Annette signalled to her that she need not practise for the time being. ("The piano ought to be in the parlor," was Miss Julie's considered judgment. "Who ever heard of having one in the sitting room? That's Henry with his new ideas.")

There was a good deal of aimless palaver for a few moments. Henri and Heloise dutifully noted the presence of the small boys, James and George, and asked them a foolish question or two. The boys mumbled answers and were duly exhorted by their father to speak up. Then Henry provided sherry and cigars, pontificated briefly on Europe, and the talk came to a dead stop.

"We have some very special news for you," Heloise said. "I'd rather have it understood as a family secret right now. We haven't told anyone else." She had raised her voice so that Miss Julie might hear too, and with one accord Henry O'Donnell, Annette, and Miss Julie beamed.

"How nice," Annette said, and Miss Julie chuckled and looked as if she might be preparing a series of appropriate reminiscences of Leonie when she was "that high."

Seeing Heloise about to go on, Henri cleared his throat nervously. "Leonie has told us that she wants to become a nun."

Annette's face fell; Henry looked startled; Miss Julie put down her needle case.

"You children run along to bed," Annette said, as if what was to ensue was not quite fit for them to hear.

"Just a minute, Mama," James said. "I'm not through coloring this boat."

"Do we have to go to bed, now?" George inquired.

"Betsy," Annette commanded, "take these boys upstairs and see that they undress."

"Mama—" Betsy protested.

"Do as I say."

The children rose reluctantly.

"Say good-night to Cousin Heloise and Cousin Henri," Annette reminded them.

The children obeyed. They gave Miss Julie a hug and unwillingly departed.

As Henry closed the door, Annette spoke. "You don't tell me," she exclaimed belatedly, for ousting the younger generation had required several minutes. "It's a bit sudden, isn't it?"

"We were not exactly prepared for it," Heloise admitted.

"It's just a whim," Henry O'Donnell said, flatly. "Girls get these notions once in a while. Just as boys want to be priests. I wanted to be one myself."

There was a general laugh at this. Even Miss Julie, to whom Henry was a battleground between the devil and the true faith, was obliged to chuckle.

"Leonie's not the first girl to be crossed in love and think she can have her revenge by going into a convent," she said, with that genius for plain statement which was often so trying. "Naturally, you feel terrible about it."

"We are resigned, if it's God's will," Henri said.

"God's will! Folderol," said Miss Julie. "I must say I never saw any signs of a vocation. Any gyrl that slouches like that one in her pew is about as far from a vocation as Ingersoll, if you want to know what I think."

"We have not encouraged her," Heloise said, taking a less firm line, now that Miss Julie had spilled the beans. "At the same time, Brother and I don't feel that we can stand in her way."

"A good purge would probably change her mind," said Miss Julie, still unconvinced that the breath of God had whispered in Leonie's ear.

"Of course," Annette said, "Ma is right. Gyrls do get the idea that they have to retire from the world when something goes wrong. I never felt happy about that Calvert boy and Leonie, but it was none of my business. My own father was a Protestant most of his life and it didn't keep me from going to church regularly."

"Except in the summertime," said Miss Julie.

"That's between me and my confessor," Annette said, a trifle sharply.

"I stand corrected," said Miss Julie, setting her jaw.

Henry O'Donnell, as a connection and not a relative, had been tactfully silent during these interchanges, but he was nevertheless seething with convictions.

"If you allow me to offer a suggestion," he said, "why not talk this over with one of the older priests—"

"Father Dodd," Miss Julie suggested. "I wish I had gone to him about poor Tessie instead of talking to Father Mellon—"

"I think that's a good notion, Henry," Heloise said, and Henri remarked that it was exactly what he had thought of doing.

No one had yet said or even intimated that, after all, it was a fine thing for a girl to give herself to God in that way and a great blessing to her family, and Henri felt the urge to supply this lack.

"As good Catholics," he said, "we naturally should rejoice if one of our family is called to the Church."

"Of course," Henry O'Donnell said ironically.

"Naturally," Annette said. "I would feel bad if it was my own daughter, though. It's not a thing that's easy to face."

"I don't think you need to worry," Miss Julie assured her. "All the religion in any of your children could be put into a mustard seed."

"My children perform their duties," Annette retorted.

"Their *duties*," said Miss Julie. And she shook her head ominously.

"Joe was a devoted altar-boy," Annette argued.

"Oh, pshaw!" said Miss Julie. "You talk like a rag baby, Annette."

"Leonie told us quite simply," Heloise said, anxious to discourage this threat of an interminable argument. "We were sitting at supper, and she said, without any fuss, that she had decided to become a nun."

Henri cleared his throat. "Of course, the situation is delicate," he intoned. "We don't want to say anything about it to anyone because we feel that if Leonie's mind is not completely made up, it may be mortifying to her to change it if people have already begun to say that she had announced a vocation."

The subtlety of this was lost on Miss Julie. "It's nothing to be ashamed of, if that's what you mean."

"I'm not ashamed of it, Cousin Julie," Henri said, with some heat. "I'm simply saying that we don't want public opinion to force the child to continue in this course, if her better judgment or the advice of her confessor should be against it."

"I've always said," Miss Julie replied, somewhat inappositely, and purely for the benefit of her son-in-law, "that it's a mistake to send a gyrl away for four years and get her away from all the young people she knows. That's the way they get big notions, and when they

come back with all that education nobody is good enough for them and they scare away all the young men."

There was enough justice in this view to irritate Henri.

"We aren't trying to knock the child down to the first bidder," he said. "Neither of us is urging her to get married or not to get married."

"You started by spoiling that child the first day she came into your house," said Miss Julie, "and now she wants her way and she's determined to get it. I hope you won't mind an old lady speaking her mind, and you know I'm as plain as an old shoe and as blunt as a bent pin. Take my word for it, this is just play-acting. Everybody knows she's fallen out with that boy. I don't know what you've told Leonie—"

"We told her," Heloise said, "that we didn't approve of that young man, and that Brother had told him he wasn't treating her fairly when there was no prospect of him marrying her."

"Well, there you have it," Miss Julie said. "She's mad as all get-out, of course. What did she say to the boy?"

"She didn't know all about it," Heloise said, "but she told him that he was making a laughingstock out of her or something like that and that she never wanted to see him again."

"And now," said Miss Julie dogmatically, "she's trying to bring him back. Just take her seriously, or at least let her think you're taking her seriously, and you'll soon see an end to this new mania. A sister! Leonie!" and she laughed heartily.

Henri was about to take exception to this slighting way of treating Leonie's vocation, but Heloise frowned at him and he spoke pacifically.

"I must say you make it sound very easy, Cousin Julie," he said.

"Leonie is very unpredictable," Heloise said. "We don't want to force her to go ahead out of pride because we seem to be encouraging her—or because we seem to be trying to stop her."

"Well, then, you might try prayer," said Miss Julie in a tone which, if employed by anyone of less piety, might have sounded satirical.

Henri nodded solemnly. "We'll pray, of course," he said.

"We think nothing ought to be said about this," Heloise emphasized. "We don't want Leonie to feel as if she couldn't back out. She's proud."

It was, of course, disappointing not to be able to discuss the news with others, but everyone agreed to the soundness of this plan.

"I wouldn't worry about it," Henry O'Donnell said. "I feel sure Leonie will change her mind."

"Better let her marry that boy," said Miss Julie.

"Cousin Julie—"

"Mr. Lemay," Henry said, "we haven't heard you sing in a dog's age."

"Oh, Henry, nobody wants to listen to an old man sing," Henri protested. "Besides, I can't sing with this on my mind. My singing days are over. I'm not even in the choir now."

"I've been after him to go over to St. Mary's," Heloise said.

"I've told Sister that I can't shoulder Charlie Durand out," Henri said, "And I'm not sure it would be fair to the Cathedral to draw all those people away—"

"Of course not," Henry said with perfect gravity. "But now, what about 'Calm as the Night'?"

"No, no. That's a German song and I've made up my mind not to sing them."

"'In Old Madrid,' then," Henry suggested.

"I love that," Annette said.

With as much alacrity as was becoming, Henri went over to the piano and Heloise took her seat. Miss Julie had a bad habit of clucking in time to music, but Henri ignored it. He sang "In Old Madrid," and "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep," and the "Armorer's Song" from *Robin Hood* and he was deeply gratified at the praise he got. Etiquette requiring that Henry O'Donnell should be asked to perform, he obliged, and in his tremulous parlor baritone gave them "Where My Caravan Has Rested" and, at Miss Julie's special request, "Dear Old Girl."

Everyone said that was fine, too, but Henri felt that there was too much *mezza voce*, and when he and Heloise were on the way home he called her attention to this.

"A big man like that," he said, "ought to sound more full and robust."

"Yes," Heloise said absently.

"I thought I was in good voice."

"You were, Brother."

"Madame always said that I'd be able to sing until I was old."

But Heloise had stayed long enough on the subject.

"I know Cousin Julie thinks we're silly," she said.

"I don't like her saying that we've spoiled Leonie. Everybody thinks that because we've been kind to the poor little thing—"

"Oh, her bark is worse than her bite. I don't know if she's right, but maybe if we *did* appear to take this business seriously, Leonie would give it up. But you never can tell which way the cat will jump."

Henri had by now recovered his low spirits.

"I feel stricken," he said. "Stricken."

"I've felt better myself."

"That miserable young blagyard," Henri muttered.

"It isn't fair to blame the boy, Brother."

Henri had another thought. "I hope," he said, "that they both have enough pride not to make up."

"Brother, I don't care a thing about that. All I'm interested in is saving Leonie from this. And then she can do what she wishes."

But Henri was obstinate. "I hope I never live to see it," he declared.

"I'm going to see Father Dodd. Maybe we can both go to the rectory tomorrow evening. I'll send a message that we're coming."

"Father Dodd is something of a zealot," Henri pointed out.

"But he knows something about life. I think his advice will be good."

"All right."

Henri got out his key. But Heloise stopped him.

"Now, for goodness' sake," she said, "when we get in the house, don't go telling Leonie where we've been. She'd just as soon accuse us of discussing her affairs as not, and she's in this touchy humor, so we don't want to upset her."

It was almost ten o'clock and the street was wrapped in quiet; the only sound noticeable was the distant passing of the Calhoun street car. Leonie had gone to bed, for want of something better to occupy her, and after Henri had seen to the shaking down of the dining room grate and had locked up, he and Heloise had a brief low-toned discussion of the evening's talk.

"At any rate, I'm not going to be hypocritical with Father Dodd," Heloise said finally. "I'll tell him just which way the wind lies. They say he advised his own niece against going into a convent."

Chapter Thirty-Two

BUT FATHER DODD, though kind, was very non-committal, and Heloise, when she reported this to Henri, admitted that she was discouraged.

Henri was forced to admit that the problem was a difficult one, and the more he thought it over, the more insoluble it seemed. As he saw things now, even going into the convent would not be the worst. People would proceed from that business of swimming without stockings and would say that Leonie was taking the veil to hide her shame. He knew what scandal was like. And if she did decide against becoming a nun, she would probably resume relations with that Calvert scoundrel.

There seemed no way of avoiding both of these evils, but Henri did not give up easily. However, he had arrived at nothing more brilliant than the possibility of buying something for Leonie's birthday. This, too, feeble recourse though it was, demanded thought and care. He did not want to buy something which would be wasted if she did enter the sisterhood. On the other hand, to buy something she could use in such a life might influence her in that direction.

He played many a hand of Canfield over these problems without any progress, when suddenly the brilliant idea came unbidden. He turned it over suspiciously, as he might have turned an extra ace if one had shown up, but he could see no fault in it. There was nothing in the scheme to violate their plan of taking Leonie's declaration seriously, or any other objection that he could see.

Henri left his promising game of Canfield unfinished and went up to Leonie's room.

"Come in," Leonie responded to his knock. "What's on your mind?"

It seemed a disrespectful way of addressing an elderly uncle, but Henri realized that this was no time for trifles. He found the room chilly.

"Are you sure you're warm enough, child?"

Leonie put aside her book. It was not a volume of the devotional type he might have expected under the circumstances.

"Why, certainly, Uncle," Leonie said. "I'm trying to learn not to indulge myself."

This evidence of her intentions checked Henri's enthusiasm a bit.

"But you're not expected to give yourself pneumonia," he objected.

Leonie shrugged, as if her physical health were the last thing to be considered.

"You don't want to be down with a cold when those friends of yours are here," Henri added, but the girl only sighed. Her expression said plainly that the entertainment of the McDevitt girls was a worldly interruption she meant to bear with fortitude.

"And I hope you're going to put aside this matter of a vocation while they're here," Henri went on.

"I expect to have a good time in a worldly way," Leonie said. "Before I take the final step that will shut me away from pleasures forever, I suppose it would be all right to see what the world has to offer."

"No harm at all," Henri said. "In fact, I think you are very wise. Very wise. I think you ought to know what the world has to offer before you renounce it."

"There's no use trying to persuade me to change my mind," Leonie said firmly. "Besides, I'd like to call your attention to the fact that interfering with anyone's vocation is a sin against the Holy Ghost."

"Thank you for instructing me in my religious duties," Henri said drily. "And may I call your attention to the fact that disrespect to gyardians is a sin against the Fourth Commandment?"

"You're right, Uncle. I'm sorry."

"Now," Henri said, earnestly, "I want to make you an offer—a suggestion. I want you to promise me that you'll consider it carefully."

He thought Leonie's eyes lighted up briefly. But she said, "There's no use talking to me about Lincoln, Uncle. That's over and gone."

"This has nothing to do with him. I'm glad you've been so sensible about that. What I was going to say was this." Henri joined the first two fingers of his right hand and held them up instructively. "We want to give you time to think over this matter of a vocation. No, let

me finish. Before you decide to give up the world, it's our feeling that, as you say, you might see a little more of it. If you'll promise me to say nothing about your intentions to anyone, and to take at least six months before you decide, I'll give you a trip to New York."

"That's a bribe," Leonie said, but she sat up with something like interest.

"No, it isn't. We don't intend to interfere with your decision. But we want you to have a change and think it over."

"It will cost a great deal," Leonie objected.

"Never mind. We promised you that trip to Virginia, and this won't cost much more. Antoinette has a relative in New York—not a very close relative," he added, for he did not want to do Antoinette the injustice of suggesting that she had close Northern relatives—"and I'm sure she'll agree to keep an eye on you. New York is a very dangerous city and I don't think you ought to be all alone."

Leonie hesitated. "I wonder," she said slowly, "if it would be right."

"I can't see why it wouldn't. Did you make a vow to enter the sisterhood at any certain time?"

"No. But I'm wondering now if I really ought to allow myself to see the world. I might be tempted."

"Oh, I doubt that," Henri said hypocritically. "Now, don't answer too quickly. You think this over, too. And it will be a sort of birthday present."

He moved toward the door.

"Just a minute, Uncle."

Henri waited.

"I'll do it," Leonie told him.

"Good," Henri said. He went over and patted her head.

"How long could I stay?" Leonie inquired.

"I'll give you a certain amount of money," Henri said. "I think I can manage five hundred dollars. And you can arrange the length of your stay by how long the money lasts."

"Why, I could stay a couple of months on that," Leonie said. Henri was disappointed. He had thought she could stay at least six. "If I didn't get too reckless," Leonie added.

"You make your plans," Henri said. "I'll talk to your aunt."

"It will have to be after the girls go back."

"Well, there's no hurry," Henri said.

He went in to tell Heloise, who received the news of his triumph calmly.

"It will get her away," Henri said jubilantly, "and it will divert her mind. It might clear up everything."

"But you'll ruin yourself, Brother. You've already spent—"

"This is more important," Henri insisted. He did not think it necessary to tell her that he meant to borrow the money on his insurance policy.

He finished his Canfield game, which he won, in high spirits. There was always a way. He was in good health. It would be years before he'd really have to worry about that insurance. And perhaps the legacy would be paid by that time. Whatever happened, it was worth the cost if he could save Leonie from another bad mistake. He had already saved her from one.

Chapter Thirty-Three

THE McDEVITTS HAD arrived and had been bestowed in the bleak rooms of Antoinette's house. Heloise and Henri had been to call, and Annette O'Donnell, and now the McDevitts were invited to dinner in Coming Street.

Henri felt generally pleased with the state of affairs. The guests he had recommended had not fallen too far below Antoinette's standard. He was in good voice and expected, when called upon, to perform at his best. He was looking forward, too, to the pleasure of hospitality. It was the first time in over four years that they had invited guests for dinner. Lafayette, at his bidding, had cleaned up the yard for the occasion. Of course, it was a little more trouble for Heloise; these things took planning.

It was more trouble for Heloise than he realized. There was, of course, the question of expense and quantity—the McDevitts did not look ascetic. And there was the problem of Queenie, who after many years of cooking for them had become confirmed in her ways and somewhat negligent.

"I declare, it's provoking," she told Henri, not altogether angrily, for Queenie amused her. "Every time I ask that woman about a dish she just grunts, or says she can do it well enough. I thought we might have ham and tomato pilau and *gateau-patate*. Queenie says she knows how to cook it but there's no possible way of getting her to follow a receipt."

Henri brushed these trifles aside.

"It's nice for Leonie," he said for the dozenth time. Leonie had been everywhere with them already, and Antoinette had introduced them to some of her friends. He had at first been a little fearful of the consequences of that, but nothing embarrassing had occurred. In fact, it was generally agreed that, for non-Charlestonians, the McDevitts were quite presentable.

He had, however, skirmished briefly with Leonie, who had re

marked that Estella and Ursula McDevitt would have plenty of male companionship wherever they went.

"Their father is having the car shipped," she said, "and in a couple of days Estella and Ursula will be driving around with boys or I miss my guess."

"But where will they meet these young men?" Henri inquired. "Of course Antoinette is going to have the Eastman boys over."

Leonie snickered contemptuously. "Uncle, Estella and Ursula will never worry about introductions. They'll have company and don't you worry about it. They'll visit all the shops, and some of the nicest young men in Charleston are clerks. Such as they are."

"You make them sound very bold."

"They are, if that's the word you want to use."

"I don't know what Antoinette will think."

"It's none of her business," Leonie said decisively.

"I don't see how you can say that, Leonie. She's their hostess."

"Hostess, my foot. They're renting rooms from her, Uncle, and you know that perfectly well. When are people in Charleston going to stop all this stupid pretense? Miss Antoinette has no control over what Ursula and Estella do."

"It's a matter of principle," Henri said. "I gave my personal approval to those people on the strength of having met them just once, and what you had told us about them and the fact that they were from Virginia—which, after all, is not much of a guarantee. I feel that I am personally responsible."

"If they don't decamp without paying their room rent," Leonie said stoutly, "I think you've fulfilled your obligation. You don't seem to think that I took a good deal of responsibility, too, recommending that old broken-down barn to people who are used to living in well-heated houses with modern plumbing."

"What possible fault could they find with the Fielding House?" Henri demanded, hoarse with outrage.

Leonie appeared determined to twit him. "Only that you could choke on the dust, and that the windows are loose and rattle every time somebody takes a good heavy step, and that the plaster falls if you so much as sneeze."

Henri was by this time reduced to snorting indignantly.

"Leonie!" Heloise said. "That will do."

Leonie assured them that she was only joking.

Later Antoinette had expressed herself as entirely pleased with the McDevitt girls and Henri had ceased to worry about their behavior.

Everything went well, from the prompt arrival of the McDevitts at two o'clock to Queenie's cooking and to the sufficiency of the victuals. The McDevitts professed themselves already enamoured of Charleston; they had spent the morning looking over the waterfront, which had delighted them, they had seen the Cathedral, had done some shopping on King Street, and had called on the Bishop, to whom Mrs. McDevitt had a letter of introduction.

"Such a delightful aristocratic old gentleman," said Mrs. McDevitt. "And the magnificent old house he lives in."

That, Henri was able to explain promptly, was one of the Izard houses, formerly the property of the distinguished Thomas Pinckney.

"We know some Pinckneys," said Mrs. McDevitt. "I believe they belong to the same family. They have a big place not far from ours in the country."

"We know a lot of Pinckneys too," Heloise said, "but they are all colored."

Henri glared slightly at this, but it seemed to touch off the spirits of the company very well, the McDevitts being Irish Catholics and, at bottom, not greatly impressed by the pretensions of Southern aristocracy.

"They make me sick," Leonie said. "The Charleston old families, I mean, scraping along on nothing."

"I don't think it's right to abuse them for their poverty," Henri said. "Not all of them are poor, either. There's still some money in Charleston."

Mr. McDevitt now seemed to take a more hearty interest in the conversation, which he had been neglecting for his dinner. Henri named some of the families who were still quite prosperous.

"But of course nothing like the wealth you'll find in New York and Philadelphia and Boston," he said.

"Or Chicago," said Mr. McDevitt. "Or Denver. I spent a good deal of time in Denver."

"Dad's been everywhere," Estella explained.

"Well, I have traveled," said Mr. McDevitt, "in my time. Business, you know, Mr. Lemay. That's really why we're in Charleston,

except that Mother and the girls thought it would be nice to come along. To spend some money," he added.

"That, after all, is a lady's privilege," Henri said.

"Sometimes," said Mr. McDevitt, "they abuse it." But he looked pleased at the idea that they should. He turned to Henri. "Yes," he said, "my associates and I are much interested in Charleston. The Panama Canal," he explained. "I know that some efforts are being made to show the rest of the country what importance Charleston has as a port so convenient to the Canal, but we thought we might interest some of your citizens in a bigger bit of advertising."

"Charleston," Henri said pontifically, "is not very progressive. Mr. McDevitt. I wish you all the success possible, sir, but I'm afraid you'll find our business men hard to convince. There was a great deal of trouble getting them to put up money for the Exposition some years ago."

Mr. McDevitt laughed. "Charleston's reputation for being conservative is well known, suh," he said. "You forget that the rest of the South is very jealous of your native city and likes to talk about its faults. But I think the gentlemen of Charleston will be interested in our proposition. We aren't going to be in a hurry or pushing, like a lot of Yankees. We Southerners understand each other better than that."

Henri nodded.

"Maybe," Mr. McDevitt said, "you wouldn't mind giving me the benefit of your advice on the best way to go about renting space. Is there a man you'd especially recommend?"

Henri thought rapidly. Here was an opportunity to do something for Charlie Desfontaines, the amateur astronomer, for whom the conclusion of a real estate negotiation would be a windfall.

"I could recommend several people," he said. "I was wondering, however, if you would prefer to deal with someone who has some influence."

"Wouldn't matter to me in the least," said Mr. McDevitt. "I know the old law of tit for tat pretty well but I'm not going to be led by it. So long as the man is reliable and honest—and I know, of course, that anyone you saw fit to suggest would be both."

"My friend Mr. Desfontaines," Henri said, "has an office on Broad Street, a few doors from the City Hall. He'd be delighted to do anything he could for you."

"I'll remember his name," said Mr. McDevitt. "And the matter of furnishings and so forth. I want it to be simple, you know, but nice."

"Mr. McDevitt," Henri said, "to be very frank with you, I hesitate about recommending friends, because I feel that I ought not to consider such matters . . . but there's a store with which my relations have always been very pleasant. Haverty's, on the corner of King and Society. I think you'd find good treatment there." He did not add that Haverty's sold Columbia records.

"And of course, although there's no hurry," said Mr. McDevitt, "there will be stationery. I believe you are in the business, Mr. Lemay?"

Henri now felt really uncomfortable.

"I was in the business for a short while," he said, "but my plans didn't work out very well. At present I'm simply a bookkeeper for a stationery firm. I'd like to assure you that I myself will derive no personal advantages whatever from recommending it."

"Oh, no matter," said Mr. McDevitt. "No reason why you shouldn't."

"Perhaps not," Henri said. "But I shouldn't recommend the firm if that were the case. However, you will not find a fairer man to deal with anywhere than Mr. Peterson. He is scrupulously honest."

"Men like that," said Mr. McDevitt, "are not too plentiful nowadays." He shook his head regretfully. "I think, Mr. Lemay, that I could not do better than follow your recommendations. If you would be so kind, suh, as to write down, at some time, the names of the companies and the gentlemen you think I ought to discuss the business with, I'd be much obliged."

"I'll do it this very evening," Henri said, "and it will be delivered to you in the morning mail."

Mr. McDevitt graciously acknowledged this promise. "And now I want to talk to my little Miss Leonie," he said. "I thought she would probably be married by the time I came to Charleston."

There was a brief moment of silence. Henri looked at the McDevitt girls, and it was obvious that Leonie had said nothing of her plans to them.

"Leonie's uncertain about her future in that respect," said Heloise, with what appeared to Henri as consummate tact.

"Too many candidates, eh?" Mr. McDevitt inquired.

"In a way," Henri answered.

"I notice Miss Leonie is very still and mum about all this," said Mr. McDevitt. "Come, young lady, tell us your answer on the subject. Don't let your uncle and aunt do all the talking for you."

Leonie blushed prettily and said that her aunt and uncle had described the situation very neatly.

"Mah goodness," said Mr. McDevitt. "If these Charleston gallants are slow, Miss Leonie, you come to Virginia with us and we'll find some eligible young men that aren't so bashful."

"You'll never get anything out of Leonie, Dad," said Estella. "She keeps secrets better than anyone I ever heard of. You can't find out a thing about her, ever. I know, I tried for four years. Didn't I, Leonie?"

"Estella, if you couldn't pump her," Ursula said, "nobody could."

"I'm interested in people," Estella said stoutly.

"I should say you are," Ursula said.

"Miss Antoinette said something about a young Mr. Calvert," said Mr. McDevitt, "or was it you, Maria?"

"I don't know who it was," Mrs. McDevitt said. "I believe one of Leonie's friends was a Mr. Calvert."

It was a moment for tact, and as Henri and Heloise hesitated Leonie had the first word.

"Mr. Calvert and I are no longer such close friends," she said. "As a matter of fact, we don't greatly admire the Calverts as a family, do we, Uncle?"

Henri laughed artificially. "There have been some misunderstandings," he said. "The sort of thing that happens when families have been acquainted for so many years."

"An old story in the South," said Mr. McDevitt humorously.

After coffee, everyone repaired to the parlor, which nearly burst with a group of such size, and Mr. McDevitt asked permission to smoke, and brought out a pocket case of magnificent cigars before Henri had a chance, as a gracious host, to offer the ones he had. Then the two men sat and discussed male affairs while the women chattered.

"This war, now," said Mr. McDevitt, and they went over that. Cotton disposed of, politics succeeded. Henri was rather innocent of the ins and outs of politics even in his own city, and to some of the questions he was unable to present even a conjectural answer.

But he was able to give Mr. McDevitt a fairly good idea of what went on in Charleston's business district and to reinforce his surprisingly accurate knowledge of who was who.

And then Henri asked to be excused and returned to his office.

"Nice people," he said to himself. "A little informal, but perhaps they wanted us to think that they were very simple themselves. I hope poor Charlie Desfontaines gets a little money out of renting that office, though how long the office will stay open after Mr. McDevitt tries to crack the shells of some of these mossbacks—"

And there, realizing that he was being inconsistent, Henri turned his thoughts back to business. He hoped he was being quite honest in recommending friends.

Chapter Thirty-Four

THERE WERE PERHAPS only two unhappy people at the O'Donnells' crowded table. Antoinette Fielding was pleased at the honor done her paying guests. Miss Julie loved company and a good dinner. Heloise enjoyed herself everywhere. Leonie seemed merry and the McDevitts were apparently delighted. Mr. Samuel Andrews and Mrs. Andrews, old friends of Henry's, were relaxed and at ease. Colonel Beecham was benevolent. Young Arthur Ferrier, who worked in Henry's office, was attentive to Leonie and the McDevitt girls. Joe O'Donnell was being on his best behavior; Betsy was listening to everything; the two small boys, at a separate table, were basking in the freedom that came only on these occasions, and Annette was objectively interested in the appearance, manners and accent of the Virginia visitors.

Henry O'Donnell, though in his element, was a bit unhappy because he had a chronic dread of Miss Julie's hoydenish personality and because he felt that they should have had a butler in readiness for an occasion like this. And Henri Lemay was unhappy because he did not feel very well. He attributed this to the excitement of the summer and he had said nothing about it, but he was irritable and nervous and his head ached. He heard Colonel Beecham giving, at considerable length, the history of the various bombardments of Fort Sumter, and was surprised to find that he was annoyed.

"It's wonderful," Antoinette said in a low voice. "how much the Colonel knows about the War."

Henri was tempted to say that the Colonel had been telling the same story for fifty years, but he agreed with Antoinette. He felt that he could do a lot better with the earthquake, but this had not come up, and they were already well into dinner and the sherry was flowing. Mr. Andrews was telling now of the discovery of phosphates on the banks of the Ashley, and Henri realized that he would probably not have a chance to shine.

Miss Julie, at this point, was heard to say "folderol," but fortunately not by Mr. Andrews, and she broke up the monologue by telling the McDevitt girls, to the obvious embarrassment of young Ferrier, of the homemade complexion remedies she and her sisters had tried in their youth. Henri got off on singing with Mrs. Andrews, whose daughter was musical. Mr. McDevitt set himself to charm Heloise and Annette with Southern flatteries. Colonel Beecham was taking the best care of Antoinette and Mrs. McDevitt, and the conversation was active if not brilliant.

Henry trotted out his best stories of some of Charleston's milder eccentrics. Miss Julie was all ready to describe the old lady who formed the thrifty habit of taking small bits of food home for a rainy day, when it was borne in upon her that the old lady was a cousin of Mrs. Andrews', and she desisted. Colonel Beecham then told of the great days of horse racing for the benefit of Mr. McDevitt, who was known to have some interest in sport, and Mr. McDevitt told some tales of the track which confirmed Henri in his opinion of racing.

Finally, mention was made of Henri's singing, and Henry O'Donnell suggested that they must have an evening party just for the sake of hearing it. Henri's resentment at the omission of his earthquake story was somewhat mollified, and he enjoyed this praise, but he felt poorly, and the bit of wine seemed to have gone to his head and made him feel hot all over. He could hardly enjoy his cigar, and he took his leave early.

When the guests had departed, Miss Julie and Annette compared notes.

"You can say what you like," said Miss Julie, "but I can't stand Virginia people. In the first place, you can't tell what they're saying half the time. That McDevitt man looks like a rascal to me."

Henry O'Donnell did not approve of these post-mortems.

"He looks well fed," he remarked, "and I suppose that's enough to condemn him."

Miss Julie stared. "We had three meals a day in our house," she said, "and sometimes four. I look well fed myself, but it's not simply because I live here."

Henry reddened faintly, but did not pursue the argument. He was rather pleased with Miss Julie for not lugging in genealogy or

the franker aspects of medicine and could afford to be magnanimous. He was pleased, too, at the deference with which Mr. McDevitt had listened to his strictures on business and politics.

"What is Mr. McDevitt's business?" Annette inquired.

"He seems to have a finger in a good many things," Henry said. "I would call him a sort of promoter."

"And what is that, Henry?" Miss Julie inquired.

"Well," Henry explained, "he tries to interest business men in advertising their cities—"

"You mean he puts on expositions?" Miss Julie inquired.

"Nothing quite as—well, as material as that," Henry said. "He helps to form associations to call attention to such things as the usefulness of the Panama Canal to the port of Charleston. That seems to be what he has in mind here."

Miss Julie stared at him again, as if he had gone out of his mind.

"Who pays him?" she inquired.

"Well, the members each put in a small amount," Henry said. "I don't think he will take much Charleston money with him. Captain Wagener almost had to pay for the Exposition himself, you remember, and that was nearly a total loss until the government voted a subsidy afterwards."

Miss Julie's ideas of business were strictly limited to a picture of men working in banks or entering figures in journals and ledgers.

"The world is getting too far ahead of me," she declared. "Anyway, that man looks to me like the last person on earth I'd trust with my money, if I had any."

"They are showy dressers," Annette said. "That woman had on enough clothes to stock Kerrison's. Oh, well, I suppose they've come up from nothing and now they have to show off."

"That older gyrl," Miss Julie said, "looks bold to me. I wouldn't think Heloise Lemay would want her niece running around with them. Although, since she's going to take the veil—"

The very idea of this sent Miss Julie off into a gale of laughter.

"Well, I must say I'm glad all this killing of the fatted calf is over," Annette said.

"At our house," said Miss Julie, remembering the old days before the War, "we always had people. I hope Henri Lemay doesn't die

of acute indigestion. He looked funny. I suppose it's his first big dinner since Christmas."

Henry O'Donnell, having had enough of this sort of vulgarity, put on his hat and left for his office. As a moving spirit among the new business men of Charleston he felt a trifle disquieted. It seemed to him that the presence of Mr. McDevitt was probably going to cost him a contribution, and in his capacity of progressive he could not very well refuse. But he, too, shook his head doubtfully when he thought of the chances of Mr. McDevitt making any considerable inroads among the stand-patters. He had shaken his head before over the fact that Charleston did not want to advertise itself.

The walk to the office appeared long to Henri Lemay. He felt tired and dispirited, and there was a sound in his ears like the faint roaring you heard in a conch shell. Deafness coming on, he thought gloomily, and there would be the end of his singing.

Mr. Peterson was gracious about his lateness, and Henri went upstairs to the little room and set promptly to work.

"Have a nice time?" Mrs. Emmons inquired.

"Very pleasant," Henri said.

"Everybody is talking about those friends of yours," said Mrs. Emmons. "The way they buy things in Kerrison's and Cart's and Allan's. They must be rolling in money."

Henri grunted as usual.

"Nobody seems to know just what that Mr. McDevitt is up to," Mrs. Emmons continued. "Some people say he's going to build a factory to make things out of asbestos and some people think he's going to buy up some of the fertilizer companies. They say he's met everybody and that he's going to speak before the Chamber of Commerce. Colonel Calvert," she added with a giggle, "says he thinks the man is an adventurer."

"Colonel Calvert had better be careful what he says about people," Henri replied angrily. He felt that the McDevitts were in part his guests, and he saw this remark as another jibe at himself.

"Well, you know what he is. I should think, though, that the Colonel had enough worries of his own. That pretty nephew of his is carrying on, they say."

She glanced sideways at Henri, who did not move a muscle of his face, and added: "They say he's brooding."

"Mrs. Emmons," Henri said, with a sharpness unusual for him

away from home, "the doings of the Calvert family are not of the slightest interest to me."

Mrs. Emmons took the snub good-naturedly but she stopped chattering.

Henri worked on mechanically, staying to make up for time lost during the dinner hour. He found Heloise looking thoughtful.

"Where's Leonie?" he inquired as usual.

"She's up in her room. Her nose is out of joint again."

"What about?"

"She says she hasn't got the clothes to go around with those McDevitt gyrls. And she's quarrelled with the Garrisons because they went somewhere with the McDevitts without asking her."

"Too bad, too bad," Henri said wearily.

"Did you enjoy the dinner, Brother?"

"It was very pleasant," Henri said.

"I nearly split when Cousin Julie started to tell about poor Mrs. Merrill taking food home in her napkin, and then remembering that the Merrills and the Andrews were cousins."

"Hm," Henri said.

"What's the matter, Brother? Don't you feel well?"

"Perfectly all right," Henri insisted. But he felt wretched, and the noise in his ears was disagreeable.

He didn't sleep well, either, and he found himself dreading that excursion around the city on Sunday as guide to the McDevitts. He had almost never shunned any activity and he could not understand himself. He lay awake thinking about Leonie, and feeling annoyed at her and sorry for her by turns. She would have to realize that he couldn't give her that trip to New York and fancy clothes to wear around Charleston, too. And much as he disapproved of her declared vocation, he felt that it was very inconsistent of her, when she meant to renounce the world, to sulk over such vanities as clothes.

He continued to feel poorly. On Saturday evening, he stayed only briefly at Antoinette's and listened to her mild complaints about what a difference paying guests made in one's life. He went to bed early and still could not sleep. On Sunday morning he went to Mass at St. Mary's, for he did not want to hear the Cathedral choir in its crippled state or to meet Cousin Julie. He found himself

dreading the afternoon promenade and he kept hoping that it would rain.

But the afternoon was mild and clear, and with Leonie and Heloise he started out for Miss Antoinette's house where they were to meet the McDevitts. The visitors had just returned from dinner at one of the hotels and had not been greatly impressed by it.

"I love Miss Antoinette," said Mrs. McDevitt, "but I sort of wish we had made up our minds to stay at the Villa Margherita. It's really very inconvenient, going out for meals three times a day. I hope you won't mind my saying that it looks as if all the great cookery of Charleston goes on in private homes."

Henri had to acknowledge that this was true, and that the days, for instance, of Eliza Lee's on Broad Street were no more.

"A business man told me," said Mr. McDevitt, "that the drummers always plan their trips to Charleston so they can get out by the train that same afternoon and not be left in the city overnight."

"Well, Dad, you know what drummers are," Ursula said, and Estella tittered.

"Charleston does not offer a great deal in the way of gayety," Henri said. "In earlier years we used to have traveling companies and a concert now and then. But now there are only moving picture houses and the vaudeville theatre. I never go to it but I don't believe even the vaudeville is first class."

"I've been to it," Estella said. "It's awful."

"Perhaps," said Mr. McDevitt smoothly, "when the Canal begins to increase the shipping, the city will have more of the things it used to have."

"Of course," Henri said, trying to bring the conversation around to the places he was going to show, "I don't need to tell you anything about the Fielding House. I'm sure Miss Fielding has told you all about the many distinguished personages that have visited there."

"Uncle," Leonie said, "you sound just like a guide."

"That's what I'm trying to be," Henri said, frowning, and he led them up to Legare Street, where he related the history of the Cathedral; he showed them the Rutledge House, where President Taft had been a guest, and then led them along the fabled Legare Street itself. He did not feel that Antoinette had been right in supposing that her paying guests would be overcome by the hallowed

shrines of Charleston, and even so earnest a man as he could perceive that they were becoming restive.

"Perhaps you'd like to return now, and we can see some more of the city another day," he suggested. But the McDevitts were polite, and insisted upon seeing Meeting Street and St. Michael's Church. By that time, however, they were obviously bored, and the Lemays and Leonie left them at Miss Antoinette's at an early hour.

"Gosh! my feet," Leonie said.

Heloise smiled in pained sympathy. "Charleston people are not walkers," she said. "And I'm one of them. I could sit right down on one of these horseblocks right now. I've a good mind to do it."

"Don't even say such a thing, Sister," Henri reproved her. "I'm afraid your friends were not very deeply interested, Leonie. Perhaps they don't find my explanations interesting."

"Oh, I think they're just tired," Leonie said. "They do an awful lot of running around, really, and I think they'd just rather stay home and doze. They've been everywhere, and I doubt if any place is very exciting to them now."

"I wanted to show them Archdale Street, where our families lived when they came to Charleston," Henri said.

"If they hear what Archdale Street's becoming, they may not think much of our ancestors," Leonie observed.

"Leonie!" Henri said in a deeply pained tone. "Young ladies shouldn't discuss such things or even know about them."

"Well, they do," Leonie said. "I guess I know a good deal that you wouldn't approve of my knowing, Uncle, and I didn't get it all from Thomas Hardy, either."

"Maybe those Massachusetts people will be more interested in seeing the old houses," Heloise said, sensing Henri's disappointment.

"Maybe," Henri said without relish. "I do hope these people are not going to break their agreement with Antoinette. It sounds to me as if they were becoming dissatisfied."

"I shouldn't have recommended her house," Leonie said. "I don't know what made me do it, except that I wanted to help her. I should have known they'd get tired of going out for meals. There just isn't any place to eat and that's all there is to it. Those fly-blown cafés are enough to turn a person's stomach."

"I should think the privilege of living in a historic house would make up for a little discomfort," Henri said.

But his head was beginning to ache again, and he did not continue the discussion. Leonie and Heloise went on talking. He did not follow what they were saying.

He knew he was going to have to see the doctor, and on the plea of an upset stomach he went to Dr. Forbes' office. Mrs. Forbes said they were having an early supper and asked him to join them, but Henri refused.

"Tell Cyril to take his time," he said. "I'll read something in the meantime."

He found an ancient copy of the *Saturday Evening Post* and glanced at the article on the forthcoming 1912 elections. That appeared to strain his eyes, and not to be very important now that it was 1914. He put it aside and looked out of the window.

Dr. Forbes waved away Henri's apologies for interrupting his supper.

"What's the trouble, Mr. Lemay? You haven't been tussling with rats again?"

Henri laughed shortly. "I just don't feel well," he said. "My head feels tight and my eyes don't seem as sharp as they were. I haven't been sleeping well and I have headaches and noise in my ears."

Dr. Forbes took his pulse and temperature. He got out his stethoscope and asked Henri to remove his coat and vest. There was a large patch in his shirt and Henri wished fervently that he had changed to a better one before coming.

"Well, your heart's all right," Dr. Forbes said. "What have you been doing?"

"Nothing unusual," Henri said. "I took a walk this afternoon, showing some friends of ours the city, and I felt very tired afterwards."

The doctor found his sphygmomanometer and adjusted it. He pumped air into the sleeve, watched the indicator and pumped again.

"Your blood pressure's up a bit, Mr. Lemay," he said.

Henri turned pale. "You mean I'm going to have apoplexy?" That was what a good many of the Lemays died of.

"I don't think so," Dr. Forbes said. "But you'll have to take care of yourself. No unusual activity. Plenty of sleep. I could take you

off red meat but I'm not sure that's necessary. Is something worrying you?"

Henri looked at him in amazement. "Why, of course," he said.

Dr. Forbes considered. "You need to relax. Get your mind off your troubles. An easy mind is the best thing. Don't get excited."

"It's all very well telling me to have an easy mind," Henri said, "but I have responsibilities."

Dr. Forbes shrugged. "I'm going to give you a sedative," he said. "I know you don't drink or smoke much."

"I've had five cigars in the last couple of weeks," Henri said.

"An easy mind," Dr. Forbes repeated, "is the best thing. You take this prescription up to Aimar's, Mr. Lemay. A spoonful after every meal."

Of course, Henri thought as he walked home with his death sentence, doctors were very calm about telling you not to worry and lead an easy life, but think of all the worries he had to contend with. And what would happen to Leonie and Heloise now? His insurance . . .

The thought smote him that, with this hanging over his head, he would not dare to borrow against that insurance, the only protection his sister and niece would have against a very uncertain future. They owned the house, it was true, and they could perhaps take in a boarder. He winced at the thought.

"It's just nerves," he told Heloise. "The doctor says I've got to have a quiet mind." He laughed bitterly. "He might as well tell me to fly. If you can, get this filled at Aimar's tomorrow," he said, handing her the prescription. "I don't suppose it will do any good. It's a sedative, Cyril said."

"Maybe you've been overdoing," Heloise said. "Why don't you go to bed early?"

"Maybe I will," Henri said evasively. He stood there looking at her. "Heloise—"

Heloise looked at him.

"I don't think we can afford to send Leonie away after all," he said.

"Don't worry about it, Brother."

That was what everybody always said. Don't worry. They ought to try and see what it felt like to have a niece forced into a convent for the lack of a little money.

Chapter Thirty-Five

ONCE THE FIRST shock of learning that his blood pressure was high had worn off a little, Henri found himself accepting the new condition as he had accepted everything else—his inability to marry, the care of Leonie, the failure of his business. He did not feel particularly well, that was true, and the drug Dr. Forbes had given him produced a distressing loginess, but the thing that troubled him most was disappointing Leonie.

If he was unable to keep his promise to her—and how was he going to?—she might be hasty. Especially since the presence of the McDevitt girls, instead of cheering her, had made her feel that her clothes were inadequate. That was something she had learned from those rich girls in college. Charleston people of the right sort never considered such things, but wore their old clothing until it could be worn no more, as a badge of honorable poverty. He had always told himself that he envied no man, but now, as he thought of Leonie, it did seem unfair that some people had everything—two homes, the opportunity to travel, a big green Pierce-Arrow car, like the McDevitts.

He was buried in these thoughts when William appeared and announced that there was a gentleman to see him.

"To see me?" Henri inquired. "Tell him I'll be right down." He removed his office coat and put on the rusty broadcloth. As he went down into the store he was not surprised to see the bulky form of Mr. McDevitt. "Speak of the devil," Henri murmured. "Of course he's come to order that stationery."

They exchanged greetings and discussed the weather, and still Mr. McDevitt said nothing about the order.

"Is there some place we can sit and talk, Mr. Lemay?"

Henri hesitated. "There's only Mr. Peterson's office," he said, "and he's in there. Perhaps we could go up to the room where I work

and I could ask Mrs. Emmons to leave us for a while. It isn't very comfortable."

"It will do perfectly," said Mr. McDevitt.

Mrs. Emmons willingly retired to a chair at the back of the store. Henri turned his stool and Mrs. Emmons' swivel chair so that they would face each other, placed an empty inkwell where Mr. McDevitt could drop the ashes of his cigar into it, and asked his visitor to sit down.

Mr. McDevitt relighted his cigar, and then, with an apology, pulled out his case and offered it to Henri. In spite of Dr. Forbes' disturbing remarks, Henri accepted.

Mr. McDevitt gazed around the shabby, ill-lighted room.

"Mr. Lemay," he said, "I think you know about my associates and our plans. Well, we have been enjoying the sights of your beautiful city for a couple of weeks now and we're ready to begin."

"I wish you success," Henri said.

"Thank you, suh." Mr. McDevitt took another deep puff of his cigar. "I've met a good many people in Charleston, Mr. Lemay, and they all speak well of you."

"I'm very glad to hear it."

"In fact," said Mr. McDevitt, "you have the name of being the most honest man in Charleston. A great compliment, suh."

Henri bowed.

"And since I'm a stranger here," Mr. McDevitt said, "as my associates will be, I have the feeling that your name may be of considerable help in persuading people in general that we are reliable. Oh," said Mr. McDevitt, smiling, "I can get along with the bankers and all that. That's not what I mean. I feel that your name would be a kind of guarantee that we're honest and aboveboard."

"But—" Henri said. He wanted to say that he knew nothing about the Panama Canal or anything connected with it, and less still about the business of publicity.

Mr. McDevitt held up a fleshy hand.

"I know what you're going to say, suh," he interrupted, smiling. "That you don't know anything about our business, and don't feel confident of your ability to contribute to it. Well, as a matter of fact, the offer is not as flattering as that. But we do need an accountant we can trust whose name other people will immediately associate with honesty and uprightness." He laid down his cigar, hitched for-

ward in his chair, and said with the greatest earnestness: "Would you be interested in the position? It would pay well."

"But—" Henri said again, his heart beating rapidly.

"You mean it's only temporary?" said Mr. McDevitt. "Well, that depends. We aren't going to stay here forever, that's a fact. But if you're worrying about the loss of this position, well, we'll always have a place for a gentleman like you. Would you mind telling me, as one business man to another, what your salary is here?"

"Ninety dollars," Henri admitted.

"A week?"

"A month," Henri corrected. "Ninety dollars a week is a rich man's income in Charleston."

"Well," said Mr. McDevitt, "that certainly is small pay for a man of your capacities, suh. We would offer you forty a week."

"Mr. Peterson," Henri said, "gave me my job back after I'd left him once to found a business of my own. I don't feel sure he would do it again."

"I've taken a liking to you, Mr. Lemay. I like your niece and my daughters' friends are always special people to me. I'm going to see that you are provided for and don't you worry about it one bit." He rose. "I mustn't keep you any longer. Just think this over for a few days and let me know. There won't be any hard feelings if you decide against it, but I'm anxious to have you."

Henri shook hands with him. "I'm grateful for the offer," he said, "and no matter how I decide, I'll still be grateful."

"Goodness," said Mrs. Emmons, "he must have told you some big news, Mr. Lemay. You look as if you'd seen a ghost."

"Just business," Henri said. "Nothing very startling."

"That's that Mr. McDevitt everybody's wondering about, isn't it?" Mrs. Emmons insisted.

"I don't know if everybody is wondering about him or not," Henri said, "but that's Mr. McDevitt."

"I wish I knew somebody like that. I'd try to get on their good side."

"Mrs. Emmons," Henri said, "we Charlestonians don't make a practice of using our friends. Now, if you'll excuse me—"

"That's right, there goes that big mouth of mine," said Mrs. Emmons, cheerfully.

The figures in his ledger danced before Henri's eyes.

Forty dollars a week! Why, he could pay off everything he owed in a couple of years, even if he borrowed money to send Leonie on that trip to New York. And that was not all. He might buy the few things he wanted. A phonograph and some records. Cigars—well, no, he had better not have cigars. An occasional glass of wine in his own home; certainly that wouldn't affect his blood pressure. And perhaps, by that time, this war would be over and the Lemay money would be divided.

But this job might mean leaving Charleston. Could he do that? Could he take Heloise away from her friends and relatives? He would miss his home. Leonie, childlike, would love to go and it would be good for her. Once away from painful memories, she might forget all this business about a vocation.

And yet Henri shrank. What was the man's purpose? Friendship? They hardly knew each other. There were many other honest men in Charleston whose names would add sobriety and reliability to this unknown Virginian and his associates in their peculiar business. Henri couldn't for the life of him see how they were going to collect enough money to make it worth while to pay him forty dollars a week.

It was hard to decide, and thinking it over shook him. At supper, Heloise noticed his agitation.

"Brother, I hope you're not forgetting your medicine. You look upset. Aren't you feeling well?"

"Feeling well? Nonsense," Henri said. "I never felt better in my life. It's just your imagination, Sister."

Heloise did not persist, but she did not like the way his hand shook and the uneasy look in his eyes. She made up her mind to keep a sharp watch on him.

Henri choked down a bit of supper. Later he tried to interest himself in singing, but he didn't feel like concentrating on that. He got out the record catalogues, and for once in many years he really felt that he might be able to buy some of the records he had fervently desired for so long, and a good machine to play them on.

Then the doubts began to return. Suppose this man McDevitt was crazy or just playing a game with him? Suppose he gave up his job with Mr. Peterson and then the whole thing fizzled out and he was without any job?

"If there were only some sign from Heaven," poor Henri said to himself, "to help me make up my mind. It's a big step for a man of my years and failing health."

He concentrated on his head, on his eyesight, and his pulse, but the symptoms weren't sufficiently marked to influence his decision in the negative. On the other hand, what this might mean to Leonie . . .

His mind was almost made up.

Mr. Peterson, of course, would be hurt. And probably Henry O'Donnell wouldn't approve.

While he was still in two minds, Henri received an official letter. It contained a notice of assessment for paving the roadway and sidewalk in front of his house under the Abutment Ordinance. The sum involved was not large, but coming on top of all the other strains to which he had been subjected, it was enough to make Henri almost apoplectic.

He tried to remember that his blood pressure was a danger, but it did no good.

"I don't want any sidewalk in front of the house, damn it!" he roared. "Flagstone has always been good enough for me. And what do we need with asphalt on a quiet street like this? Nothing ever comes here but the vegetable cyarts and sprinkler wagon and the doctor's buggy. It's a conspiracy, that's what it is."

"Now, Brother, remember your nerves," Heloise advised.

But Henri was rummaging around in the kitchen. He reappeared with the tape measure.

"What on earth are you going to do with that?" she demanded.

"I'm going to measure the street and the sidewalk," Henri said.

"But everybody will see you. They'll think you've lost your mind."

"Let them see me," Henri said. "It's my public protest against this infringement of my rights as a private citizen. I'm going to raise Cain," he added, "if the assessment is for so much as one square inch more than my measurements."

And so, in full view of the neighbors, Henri did measure the street. He put the figures down carefully on a sheet of paper, set his battered fedora on his head, and was off to work. He knew now that he was going to take that new job. With this city government, a man never knew when he was going to need money.

Chapter Thirty-Six

MISS JULIE SAT in her room before the fire knitting wristlets, the winter project of the ladies' sewing circle. She was pooh-poohing this occupation because it was the suggestion of Madame Pugno, whom she disliked intensely, but she kept at it for want of something better to do.

A loud rap on the door made her look up.

"Come in," she said.

"Colonel Calvert to see you, ma'am," Sarah announced.

"Eddie Calvert! Gracious peace!" Miss Julie exclaimed. "I'll have to put on me regular shoes— Ask Colonel Calvert to wait just a moment, please."

Miss Julie smartened herself up as well as she could in a hurry, meanwhile telling herself quite audibly that she needn't put on any airs for Eddie Calvert, and descended the stairs puffing with haste.

Colonel Calvert was standing before the fire in the sitting room, the parlor being unheated and too damp for visitors.

The firebrand was a tall elderly gentleman with a white mustache and long white hair, worn in the fashion of some fifty years earlier. He did not dress in the rusty and greenish black usually affected by gentlemen of his age and type, but wore a gray suit, a maroon tie with a large gold ring around it, and spectacles. He bowed gallantly as Miss Julie entered.

"Julie," he said, "I hope I haven't interrupted your meditations."

"I'm glad to see you, Eddie," said Miss Julie warmly. "You don't come to see me very often."

"But I think of you," said the Colonel, who had been a bit of a blade in his time. "I was thinking of Therese just the other day, and what a pretty girl she used to be."

Miss Julie went through the motion of wiping her eyes with a large handkerchief. "Poor Tessie," she said.

The Colonel, at her invitation, sat before the fire. "We are all growing old, Julie," he said.

"I suppose so," said Miss Julie, who felt very well that day.

"Sometimes," said the Colonel plaintively, "I wonder how time has gone so fast. It certainly isn't because I've been busy, but it just flies now."

"What you need," said Miss Julie, "is religious consolation. I'd hate to be my age without the hope of Heaven."

The Colonel was a freethinker in religion as well as in other fields. Had he been a steady Episcopalian, or even Baptist, Miss Julie would not have ventured the least word tending toward conversion, but she felt that any infidel was her legitimate concern.

"I'm sorry, Julie," said the Colonel, "but I just can't see it your way. Antoinette Fielding is forever after me to attend St. Michael's, but I have to tell her the same thing."

"A fine mind like yours," said Miss Julie, using the same type of argument she so often exercised on her unregenerate son-in-law, "would be able to appreciate the beauties of our faith."

Colonel Calvert shook his head. "I can't take any man's word for anything," he said. "That's my disposition, and I'm afraid God will have to put up with it, if you don't mind my expressing myself in that way."

"Put another stick on that fire, please," said Miss Julie. "You make me feel cold."

The Colonel obliged, and for good measure gave the fire a poke. "Just as a reminder of the hereafter?" he inquired.

"Don't joke about it, Eddie," said Miss Julie severely.

"It's strange that we got on this subject," said the Colonel, keeping his rather husky voice up as much as he could, "because I expected to get around to it myself before we were finished."

Miss Julie looked surprised. The Colonel asked if he might smoke.

"Oh, certainly," said Miss Julie. "Let me get you a glass of wine."

"No thank you, no thank you." The Colonel took out a box of Turkish cigarettes and lighted one. "Sure you don't mind?" he bellowed at her.

"Not in the least. Now, Eddie," said Miss Julie, "you're not on the Battery. Just be simple."

The Colonel smiled. "I'm going to get right to the point," he

said. "I don't suppose it's any surprise to you when I say that my nephew Petigru, or Lincoln as some people call him, was keeping company with your cousin, Leonie Hughes."

"It's no secret to anybody," said Miss Julie.

"Her uncle, I suppose you know, objects."

"Naturally," said Miss Julie.

"One of those unfortunate things," said the Colonel, unable to keep from smiling, for he knew Miss Julie's own valuation of her diminutive cousin. "Partly on account of religious differences, if I could be said to have any religious differences with anyone. Partly because I—er—followed the dictates of my conscience."

"And partly because you said that Henri Lemay reminded you of a bantam rooster with a megaphone," said Miss Julie drily.

"Yes, yes," said the Colonel. "That was annoying of me, I suppose."

"It's about the poor fellow's only pride in life," said Miss Julie, "his voice and his handwriting. He seems to have a new job with that Virginia man who's doing some kind of folderol about the Panama Canal."

The Colonel looked attentively at her. "Oh, yes," he said absently. "The promoter."

"Well, never mind," said Miss Julie. "I suppose he knows what he's doing."

"Doubtless," said the Colonel. "Now—" He cleared his throat, for the effort of making Miss Julie hear was a strain on his vocal apparatus. "Now," he repeated, "I rather favored that attachment of my nephew's. He's an excellent young man, Julie. As smart as he can be, and I'd hoped he was going to be a success. I didn't altogether approve of this farming business, but he was determined on it, and it looks as if he might do very well."

"I hope so," Miss Julie said.

"I approved of his settling down. I have not had the pleasure of meeting the young lady, but I've seen her and she's as pretty as a picture, and I know she has a good education."

"Pretty?" said Miss Julie, who even at seventy-four was a female. "Well, I'm not so sure about that. Too dark, for one thing, and I never liked little women with big mouths. And she's had a lot of book learning, if you call that education."

"She seemed like a pretty little girl to me," said the Colonel, stout

as ever on a matter of actual opinion. "I should have liked to see the affair go on. My nephew has no particular religious leanings. If this affair had gone as far as a proposal of marriage, Julie, I'd have urged the boy to join your Church just as a matter of policy."

Miss Julie was struck by this concession, but she hastened to set the Colonel right.

"The Church," she said, "is not interested in having people join it as a matter of convenience. Your nephew would have to be convinced that it's the true Church."

"Oh, well," said the Colonel, "anything you like. At any rate, I'd have tried to set matters right. And I could have, I think. In fact, I know I could. But the point is, the young people have quarrelled, and Miss Leonie will not see Petigru at all."

It was hard work for Miss Julie to keep back what she knew about Leonie's plans, but she did.

"I see," she said.

"It is impossible to get much information out of Petigru," said the Colonel, "but I judge that Henri Lemay put his foot in it. He practically told the boy to keep away. He said that it wasn't fair to keep a girl waiting until she was too old to attract anybody else. Petigru, while of course he was very much attracted to the young lady, felt that in some ways this was only fair. He made his attentions a bit less—well, aggressive. Now, young people," the Colonel went on, "for he too could be prosy when the opportunity offered, 'are very impulsive. In some way Miss Leonie found out about this. They quarrelled, and her pride was so injured that she won't have anything to do with him at all. He's tried to send her messages through those friends of hers, the Garrisons, but she won't even listen.'"

"Tchk, tchk," Miss Julie commented.

"Henri Lemay's interference," the Colonel explained, "had just strengthened the boy's feelings. Now he's gone to pieces, Julie. He's cutting up with liquor and—and female society."

"Dear *me*," said Miss Julie.

"I wonder if anything can be done to bring them together," said the Colonel. "I wonder, for instance, if you could influence Henri Lemay. Tell him all I've told you about the religious side, and see if you can't budge him."

"Henri Lemay is the most obstinate man for his size," said Miss Julie, "except my poor Andrew, that I ever heard of."

"I know," said the Colonel.

"I'll do my best," said Miss Julie, energetically. "But first I'm going to see Heloise. She's got more sense in her little finger than Henri has in his entire head."

The Colonel, his vocal apparatus badly impaired by this long talk with Miss Julie, took his leave and went home to rest his larynx.

Miss Julie sat down to think the matter over.

"Make haste slowly is my motto," she muttered. "My, my, how old Eddie Calvert is getting . . . Lemme see." She raised her spectacles and peered over at the clock at the mantel. "Too near dinner-time. Can't do anything important on an empty stomach."

She padded out to the kitchen to see if she could wrest a few fragments of biscuit from the cupboard, was successful, and climbed the stairs munching energetically. "Thank God I didn't tell him anything about Leonie wanting to be a sister," she thought, and as usual the idea made her laugh. "Swimming barelegged and smoking cigarettes and now she wants to take the veil. I suppose she must think she's some kind of Mary Magdalene. . . . Well, no, that's not a Christian thought about the poor child. After all, look at the way she was brought up.

"Uncle, I want this. Auntie, I want that."

"I predicted it," Miss Julie went on, talking to herself busily, "I predicted it when that child first came into their house and I saw her with a big stick of peppermint candy in her mouth. I knew they were going to spoil her and have trouble with her as sure as she was born. And," she added with gloomy conviction, "I was right."

After dinner, having sat down long enough with her wool wristlets to shake her food into place, she put on her winter coat suit and her thickest black gloves, and sallied forth to consult Heloise.

"I want to talk to you very privately," she said.

This, Heloise thought, would be difficult. Leonie was upstairs, the walls were thin, and Miss Julie's conversation was never secret. She pointed in the general direction of Leonie's room, and Miss Julie grimaced in annoyance.

"I'll come over to your house," Heloise said.

"Too far in this cold," Miss Julie said.

"Well, you've got to go back, haven't you?"

"That's so," said Miss Julie, struck by this acute reasoning. "Why, so I have."

"It won't take me two minutes to get ready," Heloise said.

She was as good as her promise, and had on her ancient gray mantle and her often retrimmed hat before Miss Julie could catch her breath.

"I told Leonie we were going over to a special meeting at the Cenacle," Heloise said. "No doubt, with her new ecclesiastical connections, she'll find out that there wasn't any. But I didn't have time to think up a better story. The child is that suspicious of everything we say and do you wouldn't believe it."

Miss Julie was all ready to tell her story in the street, but Heloise, having heard that it was of a private nature, tried to restrain her. Miss Julie, however, insisted on informing her that she had been visited that very morning by Eddie Calvert, and then, realizing that people just might overhear, she contented herself with an account of her digestive processes.

The afternoon had become blustery, and Miss Julie was cold when they reached the O'Donnell house. The children were playing in the yard and she stopped to shout an oburgation about sore throat and pneumonia, which they listened to but did not act upon. Displeased, she muttered a judgment on the present generation, to which Heloise said a fervent amen, and led her cousin into the house.

Before proceeding to the discussion, however, she asked Sarah to bring some hot coffee. "And a piece of cake or something," Miss Julie added. "Now get your things off, child, and we'll light the gas heater in my room and be cozy."

Closing the door carefully, with the air of a conspirator, Miss Julie got Heloise seated near the heater, put her own blunt-toed walking shoes against it with the expressed hope that she wouldn't have chilblains, and related her conversation with Colonel Calvert.

"I'll tell you what I think," Miss Julie said. "I'm getting old and nobody seems to give me credit for any sense, and since I haven't got poor Tessie to defend me—"

Heloise repressed a smile.

"—I don't feel so sure of myself," Miss Julie finished. "But I don't believe Leonie really has any vocation. Judge not is one of me mottoes, but I don't think the child is fit to be a bride of Christ."

Heloise shrugged.

"We've discussed this before, when we didn't know it would be so

easy. Now if Leonie marries this young man and converts him, that will be a soul saved from eternal damnation," said Miss Julie, removing her feet from the hot gas heater as she was reminded of the torments of the lost, "and who knows but that may not be much more than she'll ever accomplish as a sister of mercy?"

"Cousin Julie, I think you're right," Heloise said. "But Henri objects for other reasons besides religion. And he's been on a very high horse since he took that new position."

Miss Julie, being of the opinion that filial obedience counted for less than conversion, said: "Leonie is twenty-two. She can do just what she likes."

"That's all very well," Heloise said, "but he would never see it that way. And Henri hasn't been in the best of health lately."

"A good purging is all he needs," Miss Julie said, "and a regular dose of Beef Iron and Wine."

"I'll recommend them to him," Heloise said. "But if Leonie goes behind his back and marries this boy it will break his heart. He can't stand Eddie Calvert. I almost think it would kill him. And I'm not going to be the one to tell Leonie. I couldn't take the responsibility. And I don't think she'd even open a letter from Lincoln Calvert, so there's no way for him to be the one to tell her."

Miss Julie was saddened by having this damper thrown on her project.

"Pride goes before a fall," she said darkly. "If I was Henri I wouldn't want the loss of a soul on me conscience. Well, child, I suppose you know best. I've done what I could."

"I'm going to think it over hard," Heloise said. "You didn't say a word to Colonel Calvert about Leonie's vocation?"

"No indeed, child."

Heloise rose, threw on her coat, and departed.

"A fine mess they've made," Miss Julie muttered.

Henri, as Heloise had said, was on a high horse. His new salary had made him feel confident and a little arrogant.

He had come home a bit early, and Heloise found him by the Franklin stove smoking a cigar and sipping a glass of sherry while he listened to the phonograph he had bought on the installment plan—for, seeing his way out of debt, he had relaxed his economies.

"This Mardones," he remarked, indicating the voice that issued

from the machine, "is a rather crude singer. Not another Plançon, by a long shot."

He could still not afford Plançon records, which were five dollars, and, since they came from the shop which sold another kind of phonograph, had to be paid for in cash.

Heloise listened politely.

"He sounds very good to me," she said.

"In my good days," Henri said, "I could have done as well, if not better. I don't like his phrasing, and my low notes are certainly richer."

"Yes, they are," said Heloise tactfully. She waited for the final notes. "I'd like to talk seriously to you," she said, as Henri removed the disk from the turntable.

Henri puffed his cigar. He anticipated a request for more house-keeping money, although he had made it a point to furnish Heloise with an extra dollar and a half that week. "Seriously?" he echoed.

"I had a long talk with Cousin Julie today."

Henri nodded.

"She had a visit from Colonel Calvert."

"I don't want to hear about him."

"He told her he was worried about his nephew."

Henri shrugged. He saw very clearly to what point the discussion was leading and frowned discouragingly.

"The young man is running wild since Leonie quarrelled with him."

"Good," Henri said. "Let him go to the devil as fast as his feet will carry him."

"Brother," Heloise went on, refusing to be discouraged, "the Colonel says it was his wish from the first that Lincoln should marry Leonie."

"Is that so? Well, very nice of him," Henri said with crushing sarcasm. "Very condescending. I feel flattered."

"He says," Heloise continued in the same calm tone, "that he will undertake to persuade the young man to become a Catholic if Leonie will have him."

Henri's lip curled. "I suppose he thinks that's everything," he said scornfully. "It's not, and you know it. He ought to understand that we'd never consent to having Leonie marry one of the crazy

profligate Calverts. I'd much rather have Leonie become a sister than marry that young ruffian."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, I am. There was always something underhanded about Eddie Calvert. Why couldn't he come to me instead of sneaking off to Cousin Julie? We don't want her interfering in our business. I suppose he didn't dare."

The thought of Colonel Calvert being afraid of her brother tempted Heloise to laugh but she concealed her amusement. "I doubt if he was afraid," she said. "I guess he felt we wouldn't receive the offer very sympathetically coming direct from him."

"And he was absolutely right, for the first time in his life. I don't want any niece of mine marrying a traitor's nephew and it won't take me long to tell either of them just that."

"Have you thought," Heloise asked, abandoning diplomacy, "that Leonie is of age? She doesn't really have to ask us."

Henri looked at her as he might have looked at an escaped lunatic. "You don't mean to suggest that she would disobey? Leonie never would do that. She knows that neither one of us would ever forgive her. There's no use," he said sternly, "continuing this argument. I'm going to send Leonie to New York, and after that, if she makes up her mind to enter the convent, we'll have to get used to the idea."

"Cousin Julie doesn't think Leonie's vocation is very strong," Heloise said, but before the words were out of her mouth she realized that she had said the wrong thing.

"I'm sick and tired of Cousin Julie sitting in judgment on Leonie," Henri said. "What does she know about it? I'd like to know why Leonie can't have just as good a vocation as anybody else."

"Brother," Heloise said, beginning to lose her temper at this obstinacy, "you're arguing for the sake of arguing and you know it. You don't want Leonie to be a sister."

"It was not my wish," Henri said. "But I resent that fat old woman saying she's not good enough. You'll go far to find a sweeter, purer girl than Leonie."

"Well, let me tell you something," Heloise said. "You'll push Leonie right into that convent if you're not careful. You know how determined she is."

"I think she'll change her mind," Henri insisted, "once she completely forgets that fellow. She told me she was through with him."

"Do you think he'll let her? He's written to her. She won't read the letters, but she knows what's in them. And the Garrison girls have tried to give her messages."

"I'm glad she has the spunk not to give in," Henri said.

"She's only waiting," Heloise said, "for *us* to give in and make the overtures to her. She hasn't forgotten him one bit."

"Well," Henri said, grimly, "she'll wait a long time. Unless *you* go behind my back. But of course you won't. I forbid it."

"I don't intend to go behind your back," Heloise said, looking with some concern at the redness of Henri's face and the congestion in his temples. "I have nothing more to say."

"Once and for all," Henri said, "I'll have nothing to do with it. And if Leonie *does* take up with that blagyard again, I'll know who put her up to it. You or Cousin Julie."

"The trouble with you, Brother," Heloise said, "is that your new job has gone to your head." And before he could reply to this unheard-of piece of rebellion, she walked out, slamming the door behind her.

"That foolish old woman has put this into Heloise's head," Henri muttered wrathfully. "Damn her soul!" He kicked the chair as a surrogate victim. "Making my own sister insult me! I won't forget it. I can see what she's after. She thinks Leonie converting this young man will mean a soul saved, and that she'll get some of the credit. And she thinks I'll feel I'm committing a sin by standing in the way. Well, I'm a better judge of my conscience than Cousin Julie and it won't take me long to tell her that I don't want any of her interference."

He got out another record and looked carefully at it for any sign of a scratch.

"As for having a Calvert in the Church," he thought, disgustedly, "why, that would be a disgrace to our faith. I'd consider it a sin to encourage it."

Chapter Thirty-Seven

HENRI HAD NEVER quarrelled with his sister, but he felt now that she had gone too far. The idea of her saying to his face that his new position had gone to his head! He was not in the habit of permitting that organ to be affected by either failure or success, even by his flattering connection with the Panama Canal Associates. To work in an office of his own, without interference, and in a dignified manner, as befitted the son of a landowner and the heir to the Lemay millions—and not to have to work too hard, either—these were only what he felt he had deserved, and he thought Heloise might do better to rejoice in his good fortune instead of crudely jeering at it.

Besides, she was working now to turn Leonie against him. He meant to make her feel his displeasure. He had been humble and self-sacrificing too long. Now that he had a chance to be happy he wasn't going to allow anyone to interfere.

But he didn't feel happy. He disliked strife. He was very uneasy about Leonie, and he had to admit to himself that there was something very unsatisfactory about his position; and puzzling, too. He could not understand the Panama Canal Associates. Small contributions to the project came in regularly from business men of the city, which in itself was a cause for amazement to Henri, and there were expenditures of a moderate sort. But the bookkeeping was not enough to keep him busy two hours a day.

The others did not seem to work very hard either. Mr. McDevitt and his two associates, a younger man named Ross, with a black mustache and dandified manners and a small, wispy, silent man of his own age, Mr. Stephen, held constant conference with visitors, and Mr. Stephen saw to it that the stenographer got out the promotional letters and pamphlets which urged shippers to take notice of the advantages Charleston offered as a port directly in line with Panama. But that was all.

At Mr. Peterson's, although the work was harder, Henri had known every detail of the business. Mr. Peterson, in some ways, had treated him almost as a partner, asking his advice, confiding his difficulties. Here he had no voice in anything, and he disliked the familiar way young Ross called him "Major."

During the first week Henri had pacified himself with the assurance that greater activity would come in time. However, during the second week he had found time heavy on his hands and had asked Mr. McDevitt if something more could be found for him to do.

Mr. McDevitt had looked up smilingly.

"Why, that's nice of you, Mr. Lemay," he said. "I sure do appreciate that kind of feeling, suh. Right now, I'm sorry to say, there's nothing you can do except to keep up the accounts. Later I'm going to try to give you some more responsible work. Now, you just be patient with us."

Henri had thanked him and gone on wondering. He wished particularly, now, that he could be busier, for that would have kept his mind off this annoying new development of Heloise and Cousin Julie trying to betray him. It was as if the treacherous influence of old Calvert had crept in to poison his household.

And, seeing the tall spare figure of the renegade coming in his direction on Meeting Street late one afternoon as he was going home, he deliberated insulting the fellow then and there. He watched warily as the Colonel approached, and then had a sensation of panic as the old gentleman, with the courtliness of another day, lifted his hat and said, "Good-evening, Mr. Lemay."

Henri struggled with the temptation to cut him, as he deserved, and replied with frigid civility.

"It's been a pleasant day," the Colonel observed.

Henri agreed that it had been and began to move on. To his embarrassment, the Colonel fell into step with him.

"Mr. Lemay," he said, "I'm going to ask you to overlook what I'm afraid you'll consider interference."

Henri's back stiffened, but now that he was face to face with this Machiavellian scoundrel, all the grandiose formulae of insult deserted him.

"That depends, sir," he said.

"What I am going to say, sir," the Colonel proceeded, "comes

from an absolutely disinterested motive. As a friend of Antoinette's, I don't want to see you compromised."

"What do you mean, sir?" Henri demanded.

"Mr. Lemay," said the Colonel calmly--that calm was one of the things his detractors could never forgive--"you have the reputation of being an extremely honorable man."

"Yes, sir, I have," Henri said, belligerently. "And if I may say so, sir, I think I deserve it. I should not tolerate having it questioned."

"Exactly," Colonel Calvert agreed. "And there are times when a man is so completely honest that he doesn't see the dishonesty of other people. Now don't get upset, Mr. Lemay. But that man McDevitt is a crook."

The suddenness of it made Henri catch his breath.

"You had better be careful, sir, what you say about a Virginia gentleman," he said severely.

"I have not been in the habit of taking too much care about anything I say," the Colonel said with a faint chuckle. "I'd be perfectly willing to go right into that office and tell the man what I think of him. The only trouble is, that a lot of very unwise people are concerned, and I'd do them a poor service if I made a fuss. That's why I came to you. You resign from that position, Mr. Lemay." He struck his cane firmly on the sidewalk. "Resign immediately. That's my advice."

Henri stared. This was some deep-dyed scheme of the Colonel's to discredit and embarrass him. The fellow had always been jealous of him on Antoinette's account.

"I am much obliged to you, sir," he said. "Good afternoon." And turning away sharply, he crossed the street, never looking back (although he would have liked to) to see the effect of this snub on the Colonel, as people called him.

But he was troubled, and he walked the rest of the way home in a wretched state of uncertainty. All his doubts assailed him--the small amount of work being done in the office, the disproportion between the expense incurred and the small return represented by the contributions.

"Old Calvert never trusts anybody or believes anybody," he argued with himself. "I'll look into this, of course, for the protection of my good name. But if I find that scoundrel was lying, I'll take a whip to him. Yes, so help me God, I will."

It occurred to him, too, that if he could show Calvert up for a troublemaker and the kind of man who would try to frighten a poor gentleman out of his job just for spite, Leonie might realize, once and for all, what kind of people the Calverts were.

But the first consideration, for a Southern gentleman, was to guard his honor, and Henri was resolved to watch for anything shady and, at the first sign, to expose it.

"But it would make an ass of me," he thought uncomfortably. "Why, the thing is preposterous! How could they fool an experienced business man like me? It's all nonsense. I don't have to believe ill of people on anybody's say-so. Especially a blagyard like that."

He must be careful not to antagonize Mr. McDevitt by any snooping or signs of mistrust. Forty dollars a week . . . And then he was ashamed of himself for thinking of the money. Lemays didn't do things like that.

On the other hand, it was a man's duty to his family to make as much money as he could, wasn't it?

He tried to settle his uneasiness and pacify his conscience but his mind was not comfortable all evening. If what the unspeakable Calvert had said was true, he would be disgraced and made a fool of. If not, he would be miserable, suspecting something wrong at every turn. The sherry he sipped that evening tasted sour in his throat, and his cigar had a bad odor. It even seemed to him that the phonograph was out of tune. And then he knew that he was afraid.

Only the next morning, as Henry O'Donnell sat at his desk in the offices of the Edisto Cotton Company, Mr. Jenkinson appeared in the doorway.

"Mr. O'Donnell, may I interrupt you for a few moments?"

"Certainly, sir. For as long as you like," Henry said in his most gracious manner.

Mr. Jenkinson, Henry's superior officer, a wheezy, cantankerous and excessively conservative old gentleman, was always slow in getting to the point, and Henry waited, as patiently as a man of his temperament could, for the story.

"Preposterous, that's what it is," Mr. Jenkinson announced finally, smoothing his white mustaches. "I can hardly believe it . . . the audacity, too."

Henry lit a Turkish cigarette and waited some more.

"Before I make a long story short," Mr. Jenkinson went on, "I want you to keep this a secret. To begin with, I'm breaking my word by telling you. So it's understood that you're to say nothing about this to anyone?"

"Very well, sir," Henry said.

"You know this man McDevitt, from Virginia?"

"I've met him," Henry said.

"He hasn't talked to you?"

"Not about anything specific," Henry said.

Mr. Jenkinson took a breath. "You know all this hocus-pocus about publicizing—I think that's the word—the importance of Charleston as a port on the Panama Canal route?"

"Of course."

"Well," said Mr. Jenkinson, with the air of a man getting something over with, "it's all a blind, Mr. O'Donnell. A blind."

Henry raised his eyebrows.

"Why, that fellow and his associates, as he calls them," said Mr. Jenkinson, "are out to corner the nitrates market."

Henry started violently. He had money in nitrates.

"What?"

"That's it," said Mr. Jenkinson. "Of course, no one was supposed to tell. It was always a secret between these men and the person they were talking to at the time. It's my belief that they've already taken between seventy-five and a hundred thousand of dollars from the city's representative business men. The scheme is dishonest, Mr. O'Donnell, and I'm glad I had nothing to do with it. I wouldn't have guessed it had gone so far except that a few trifling notes I endorsed were being taken up. Then I talked to Mr. Harrold at the bank and he tells me the same thing is happening all over town. He said there was a general tightening of credit because every bank had been experiencing heavy withdrawals."

Henry shook his head. "I'll be damned," he said. "The business men of this city will turn down a good thing because they're too conservative, and then—"

Mr. Jenkinson turned a sad eye upon him. "I haven't told you all about it yet," he said mildly reproving.

"I beg your pardon," Henry said.

"Aside from the fact that a corner like this is not honest," said

Mr. Jenkinson, "this McDevitt is going to take the entire sum of money and not one of the investors will ever hear of his cash again. And they can't complain, because naturally they won't want it known that they had anything to do with it. That would discredit both their acumen and their reputations for indulging in—well, shall we say only legitimate undertakings?"

"It's a confidence game," Henry said. "And of course there's just enough of the element of dishonesty in it to shut everybody up. I am ashamed of my fellow business men, Mr. Jenkinson."

Mr. Jenkinson blushed too for his fellows. "Of course the man was a resident in Miss Fielding's house," he said. "He had lots of money and his wife and daughters have been spending it royally. That should have made people suspicious, now that I think of it. But they were introduced to the best people. The Panama Canal proposition was unexceptionable, though visionary. And Mr. Henri Lemay was employed as accountant."

"What made you suspicious in the first place, Mr. Jenkinson?"

"A friend of mine," said Mr. Jenkinson, "came to me and asked my advice. There was no exact evidence of irregularity, but the undertaking seemed to be on such a large scale that I couldn't understand these men coming to Charleston for any good reason. And then this acquaintance of mine—from out of town, I am glad to say—remembered that he had seen that little dark fellow, Ross I believe, and told me that he'd take his oath it was the same man who cheated him in a card game on the Clyde Line. I haven't made any investigation because my hands are tied, but the thing's as plain as the nose on your face. I am using a figure of speech," Mr. Jenkinson added, politely.

"Well," Henry said, "I'm amazed, Mr. Jenkinson. It does seem to me that Mr. Lemay's being employed by the firm, and the fact that this man McDevitt has been a paying guest in Miss Fielding's house, were pretty slim indications of his reliability. I think we ought to go right to the Mayor and the prosecutor."

"No, no," Mr. Jenkinson protested. "Couldn't do anything of that sort. Too much embarrassment."

"Your word of honor," Henry said, for he had little patience with the quixotic chivalries of Mr. Jenkinson and his type, "is certainly not binding in the case of a fraud like this."

Mr. Jenkinson clasped his hands nervously. "Couldn't have it

known," he said, "that they were imposed upon. . . . Certainly you can see the humiliation involved. They'd be the laughingstock of the city. No, I must ask you as a personal favor—and you've given your word, you know—to make no revelations. None whatsoever."

"Then why did you confide in me?" Henry inquired.

Mr. Jenkinson swallowed. "You're a young man of judgment," he said, "and I felt that I just had to unbosom myself to somebody. I also thought I might be able to save you from a similar mistake."

"I appreciate that very much," Henry said.

Mr. Jenkinson sighed heavily. "If the man had been a Northerner—but he was from Virginia."

"That makes a considerable difference," Henry said, drily.

"Yes," said Mr. Jenkinson. "I hate to think of Miss Antoinette Fielding's feelings, too, if she were to find that people she had under her patronage, so to speak, were frauds." He rose. "Well, it makes me feel better to have told you about this. It wore on my spirits, Mr. O'Donnell. Thank you," he added, strolling out of the partitioned cubicle.

Henry O'Donnell, after cursing a bit to relieve the pressure, thought fast. His hands were tied, too, and it was absurd that they should be, but he had to get Henri Lemay out of this mess. It would kill the poor old man.

"I'll go there at dinnertime," he decided. "It wouldn't do for me to go to his office, considering my connection with Mr. Jenkinson, and Lord knows who else that's been made a sucker of." He shook his head, and recalling occasions when he himself had been taken in, he reflected cheerfully that the losses had not been impressive. And, being human, he could not resist a chuckle.

He called his home and said that he would be late for dinner, and at half past one he set out for Henri's house.

Heloise answered the doorbell. She was astounded to see Henry O'Donnell there on a week day at dinnertime.

"How are you, Miss Heloise?" Henry asked. "Looking as pretty as ever, I see."

"Now, Henry," Heloise said.

"Mr. Henri back to dinner yet?"

"He's upstairs prinking," Heloise said.

"I'd like to see him," Henry said. "Nothing to worry about," he added, seeing her startled expression. "Just something I want to tell him.

Heloise sighed. "I had a feeling that something had happened to Cousin Julie," she said.

"Not that I know of," Henry said.

"Sure you won't have dinner with us?"

"No, thank you, ma'am."

The master of the house started, too, at seeing Henry O'Donnell, but made him welcome and pressed him to stay to dinner.

"Maybe you'd like to hear my new phonograph," he suggested, waving proudly at it.

Henry, who detested talking machines, said politely that he would defer the pleasure to a later date.

"Henry wants to talk to you, Brother," Heloise said, and she closed the door as she went out.

"What's the trouble, my boy?" Henri asked, wondering if by any chance this self-possessed young man might be going to ask his advice.

"Mr. Lemay," Henry O'Donnell said. "I have some news for you. I would like to say beforehand, that nothing I am going to say reflects on you in the least."

"Reflects on me?" Henri inquired. "What do you mean?" But he knew the worst already.

"I'll explain," Henry said. "First of all, this puts me in a very awkward position. I have given my word to a gentleman I respect that I will not betray his confidence, and yet I feel that I have to do so for your sake. So I shall have to ask you to remain as mum about this as if your life depended on it."

"If you wish it," Henri said.

"Then I'll be as brief as possible. Mr. Lemay, what do you know about the Panama Canal Associates?"

"Why, very little," Henri said uneasily. "I keep the accounts, and that is all, and between us, they're not very difficult to keep."

Henry nodded. "Mr. Lemay," he said, "you are a very honest man. I'm sure it never occurred to you that your reputation, and the fact that this man and his family were staying at Miss Fielding's, were a blind for a swindle?"

"I don't believe any such nonsense," Henri said weakly.

"Mr. Lemay, this man McDevitt has been working under cover of this so-called promotion to put over a crooked deal. He's pretending to be in a position to corner the nitrates market."

Henri turned white. "Nitrates? I never heard of any nitrates."

"I can't offer definite proof without embarrassing other people," Henry said. "Everyone involved was sworn to secrecy. Never mind how I found out. Just take my word for it that the deal is crooked to begin with, and that McDevitt and his gang will keep all the money they've taken because nobody will dare complain."

"I had nothing to do with it," Henri said indignantly.

"Of course not. Nobody will think you did. But the right thing for you to do, at this moment if possible, is to sever your connections with this man McDevitt."

The vision of forty dollars a week for an indefinite time faded from Henri's mind. He did not want to believe what he was being told, and yet he could not help it. He remembered an earlier feeling that perhaps McDevitt was a counterfeiter.

"Poor Antoinette," he said. "She introduced those people to her relatives and friends, and she has them in her house."

"It's serious," Henry said. "But that's not your fault."

"Yes it is," Henri said. "I recommended them to her. You remember the girls were Leonie's college friends, and Leonie recommended Antoinette's house. I vouched for them myself."

Henry O'Donnell shook his head. "It's too bad," he said. "The only thing to do is get out, immediately. And you might drop a strong hint to this McDevitt that his presence in Charleston is not desirable."

"Are you perfectly sure you're right, Henry?"

"As sure as I can be," Henry said.

"Then we ought to denounce him," Henri said. "I'll go to the Mayor's office myself, and I'll see Mr. Cline. Isn't he the prosecuting attorney now?"

"Yes he is," Henry said, "but you can't do anything like that. You'll start a scandal that will rock Charleston, financially and socially, and do more harm than good."

"If wrong has been done," Henri said, loftily, "then it's our duty to expose it."

"No, sir," Henry said. "you can't follow any moral code. You

can't violate your word. You've got to protect other people. Never mind the rights and wrongs of it."

"But my reputation—" Henri protested.

"I don't think anyone will question your entire honesty in the matter," Henry said. "You've got a lifetime of reputation for being above reproach, and nobody is going to think the worse of you for being imposed upon in a matter of this sort."

"Leonie's name has been linked with those McDevitt gyrls ever since they came here," Henri moaned.

Henry nodded. "All the more reason, don't you think, for keeping this business quiet? It certainly won't be good for that girl to be known as the friend of a swindler's daughters."

"Looking at it that way," Henri said, "I suppose I'll have to keep quiet. Especially after I've given my word. But I'll tell that fellow I don't want to have any more to do with his business, and I'll do it this very afternoon." He shook his head. "I feel that I've been accessory to a crime. All those men losing their money."

"I guess they could afford it," Henry said. "And it served them right."

"I'm much obliged for your interest, my boy," Henri said, wretchedly.

"It was my duty," Henry O'Donnell said. "Now I'll go. Your dinner is waiting."

He had meant to ask about Leonie's vocation, but he didn't.

Henri could not eat. He explained this, when Heloise remarked upon it, by saying that he had something very important on his mind, and without waiting to smoke he stumbled off in the direction of the McDevitt offices, a man whose honor had been betrayed. By himself. For, when Colonel Calvert had hinted to him that all was not fair and square, he should have taken steps to find out immediately. By waiting a day he had compromised with his own good faith.

His obligation to resign immediately was, of course, as clear as daylight. But that did not end the misery he felt. Being old and disappointed, he shrank from killing his hopes. He would have to return that phonograph and those records, for which he had begun to pay with tainted money, and which he would never be able to own now. He would be a marked man—and Leonie would be known, at least to a few people, as the niece of a man who had con-

sorted with thieves. He could not even make the proper amends by revealing the criminal nature of the affair. Worst of all, perhaps, he was under a distinct obligation to Colonel Calvert. How the fellow would sneer at him now!

Henri groaned audibly at the thought. His pride had been lowered into the dirt.

He found Mr. McDevitt at his large desk, looking very bland and imposing, and a glance at the man's frank, open face made him hesitate. Suppose there should be a mistake? Then he would have put himself out of a job and gained nothing by it. On the other hand, he could not take the risk of further connection with a dishonest enterprise.

"Well, Mr. Lemay," said Mr. McDevitt, expansively.

"Mr. McDevitt," Henri said, "I am obliged to resign this position."

Mr. McDevitt looked hurt. "Why, what's the matter, sir?" he asked. "I thought you were going to be a fixture with us."

Henri gathered his forces. He drew himself up to his full five feet-three and looked the Virginian full in the face.

"It has come to my attention," he said, "that you are engaged in a fraud, sir. You have used my name to gain credit."

"Who says so?" asked Mr. McDevitt, smiling.

"I am not at liberty to say," Henri replied, standing his ground.

"I thought not," said Mr. McDevitt, scornfully. "Well, it doesn't matter. As a matter of fact, Mr. Lemay, we are winding up our affairs here. If you don't care to remove to another city—"

"I consider the suggestion an insult," Henri said. "In an earlier day, sir, I would have called you out."

Mr. McDevitt, rather like Goliath when the undersized David flung his challenge, grinned contemptuously.

"But these are different days," he said. "Mr. Lemay, I'll make you a sporting offer. Go to the prosecuting attorney and tell him what you've heard. I'll give you a list of people to give him as witnesses. If any one of them consents to appear against me, I'll give myself up."

"I am not interested," Henri said. "I'll get my belongings and go. You'll find the books in order. And I don't thank you, sir, for associating the name of a Charleston gentlewoman in your doings."

"You recommended us, didn't you?" Mr. McDevitt inquired.

Henri stared at him contemptuously, but said nothing.

He gathered the personal possessions he had left at his desk, wrapped them up, and left the books open for inspection. Then, putting on his hat, he strode out.

He did not like to be seen going around idle during business hours, although, Heaven only knew, he could not long sustain the pretense that he was occupied. And he hated to face Heloise's questions. He could not go to Antoinette's, where he felt that he was no longer fit to set foot.

The afternoon was damp and a wind was springing up and he felt chilly and tired and discouraged. There would be no trip for Leonie now—and as he would probably be no longer able to support her and Heloise, the child would have to go into a convent. There was simply no hope in anything. None.

Perhaps it would feel good to lie down and rest. He turned toward his dishonored home.

Heloise, for the second time that day, was startled by an unexpected arrival.

"Brother, what on earth is the matter?"

"I'm not feeling very well," Henri said. "I think I've caught cold. I felt a chill."

"You go right to bed," Heloise said, "and I'll have a hot water bottle for you. Take a glass of that sherry. Why were you so foolish as to go out when you were so sick?"

Henri shook his head miserably. He did not want to answer questions. He remembered about his blood pressure and it terrified him.

"And what's this package?" Heloise inquired.

"My things," Henri said faintly. "My things from the office. Mr. McDevitt and I have had a disagreement, and he doesn't feel that he can go on in Charleston, anyway."

"Oh, my Lord and Saviour!" Heloise exclaimed. "And now—" But she stopped when she saw how the color had drained out of Henri's face.

"Heloise," he said. "Heloise—" He burst into tears. "Now I have to look for another job," he said. "Let me get upstairs."

Chapter Thirty-Eight

DR. FORBES ARRIVED promptly.

"Well now," he said, "what's this?"

"I'm afraid it's a stroke, my boy," Henri told him.

But Dr. Forbes, after a thorough examination, diagnosed the case as grippe. He prescribed rest, warmth, milk and whisky, and Dover's powders, and assured Henri that he would be all right in a few days.

Downstairs, he was not quite so cheerful. "I don't know," he told Heloise. "It could turn into pneumonia. He's so thin and run-down and he shows symptoms of shock. Has something upset him?"

"He's given up his job," Heloise said.

Dr. Forbes looked concerned. "That is something to worry him," he said. "I'll be in tomorrow. Meanwhile, try to keep him comfortable. I'll leave this prescription at Aimar's."

Heloise went tearing up to her brother's bedside.

"Now, you'll be all right," she told him. "Just don't worry." She was dying to ask all the hows and whys of his leaving Mr. McDevitt but she controlled her curiosity.

Henri released a profound sigh. "Heloise," he said, "I'm an old bird. I know the truth about this. And I'm not afraid to go."

"Don't talk like that, Brother," Heloise said, genuinely frightened.

Henri waved her away. "Leave me by myself," he said.

Leonie tried to comfort her aunt.

"I don't know," Heloise said. "He's so little and frail and he takes everything to heart so. You didn't hear him say when he came in that he'd lost his job with Mr. McDevitt?"

Leonie looked her surprise. "Why?"

"You know how touchy he is. They may have asked him to do something that he considered beneath his dignity." She laughed sadly.

"Do you suppose I could do anything to patch it up?" Leonie asked.

"No. You know how he resents interference or advice. No, child, we'll just have to trust in God. I might have known something like this was coming. He's been upset about leaving the choir and then he was disappointed over that fool legacy. I'd like to have Eugenie Poiron's head on a chopping block for telling him about it. And you know he's been worrying about you."

"I never meant to worry him," Leonie said. "It's just the way I am and the way he is."

"I think you ought to keep quiet, now, about going into the convent. That was the biggest shock of all."

"Of course," Leonie said, "I'll stay and take care of the two of you, Auntie. You know that."

"There he is calling," Heloise said, and rushed upstairs.

Henri had been dozing. "I want you to tell Cousin Julie," he said. "And send for Father Schmidt."

"I'll send Leonie," Heloise said. "Anything you want?"

"I just want to examine my conscience," Henri said.

It was better this way, he felt. Better to die, now that he had caused all this mischief. If people knew that he had died of the shock and grief, they wouldn't be so harsh after he was gone.

Heloise insisted on lighting the fire, although Henri protested at the expense. She suggested that he might like to have Lafayette bring up the new phonograph, where he could enjoy it.

"No, no," Henri protested feebly. "I never want to see it again. Besides, it's not worth the bother. I don't expect to be here long."

Heloise left him, but she sat in the doorway of her room directly across the hall and waited.

Miss Julie arrived first, having condescended to use the family car.

"Cousin Julie," Henri said, turning mournful eyes upon her, "I'm afraid this is going to be the end."

Miss Julie scoffed gently. "I'm storming Heaven with me prayers," she said. "All you need is a little rest, and a good tonic. Beef Iron and Wine is my standby."

Henri groaned and closed his eyes and Miss Julie went downstairs where she became considerably less cheerful.

"It's all very well to look on the bright side of things," she told Heloise, "but after all, there was poor Tessie, who never had a sick

day in her life until the very end, and then she went fast once she was on her back. Your father and mother lived to be a good age, but Henri looks like the St. Foixes. They were Huguenots originally," she added with a touch of distaste, "and there wasn't much to them." She broke off, seeing Leonie at the door. "Well, child," she said, "I hope your tongue is busy with prayers for your poor old uncle. You know what I told you in the cyar. Remember to say, 'The speedy recovery or grace for a happy death.' I've got a prayer for the sick right here in me bag. I forgot it." She fumbled among the rosaries, peppermints, tinfoil and bric-a-brac, and brought out the leaflet. "Here."

Leonie promised to say the prayers.

"I hope you've marked my words," Miss Julie went on, "about standing by your uncle and aunt. If anything happens to poor Henri, you're all your aunt has. They've done everything for you. You listen to an old lady and make up your mind that no matter what happens your place is here."

"Of course, Cousin Julie."

"Oh, I know butter wouldn't melt in your mouth," said Miss Julie, "but pretty speeches aren't everything."

Leonie accepted this humbly. "I'll do everything you say, Cousin Julie," she promised. "Excuse me a minute. I hear Uncle calling."

Miss Julie shook her head. "No doubt she sees freedom ahead," she muttered. "What did Henri say about what Eddie Calvert told me?"

"He said he'd rather see Leonie in a convent than married to a Calvert," replied Heloise.

"Well, it's too late to excite him now," said Miss Julie. "And what's all this about losing his job?"

"I don't know anything about it."

Miss Julie was not in her most benevolent mood—the roast pork at dinner had disagreed with her. "He made his own bed, there's no denying that," she said. "I never did like those people. Virginians! He had to go and take up with them when he had a good job with that Mr. Peterson."

"He didn't get very much for it."

"Enough," said Miss Julie, "for anybody without ideas of grandeur. . . ." She looked disapproving. "Well, I must be going, child."

I just came in to give you what comfort I could. I don't want to be in the way when Father Schmidt comes."

"You keep away from those gyirls, Leonie," Henri admonished, when Leonie responded to his summons. He held her hand. "And take good care of your aunt. Don't go and leave her."

"I won't," Leonie assured him. "That must be Father Schmidt. I'll go and see."

It was really Miss Julie going out, but Father Schmidt came a moment later. Although he did not give extreme unction, he heard Henri's confession and administered communion, promising to come immediately if needed. Henri, though regretful of not having had the last rites, felt easier in his mind. Father Schmidt didn't think his interference with his niece's vocation was important, especially as he had only asked her to wait and consider. He also did not think it was necessary for Henri to make restitution of the money he had taken in good faith from Mr. McDevitt (whose name, naturally was never mentioned). But when Henri confessed a lifelong harboring of resentment against Colonel Calvert, the priest advised him to seek a reconciliation—or at least to forgive his enemy.

Relieved about his spiritual state, Henri began to worry about Leonie. With him gone, the child would have nobody to advise or guide her. She did not appreciate it, but he had watched over her well-being every minute, and he thought he ought to give her some last-minute counsel about her life, while he still had the strength. He asked Heloise, who had been sitting quietly beside him since Father Schmidt's departure and listening to his last wishes, to call the girl.

He patted her hand as she sat down to listen to his words of wisdom.

"Leonie," he said, "you've been the apple of my eye."

"I know, Uncle, and I'm really grateful for it."

"Everything we've tried to advise you to do—it was for the best. I want to give you a few last pieces of advice. There'll be nobody to do it after I'm gone—"

But he found that the wisdom of which his mind had felt so full did not come to his lips.

"I want you to be happy," he said. "Everything we've tried to get you to do was for your own happiness. That boy, for instance—" He had almost said "that ruffian," but he remembered that he was

in the state of grace and that Father Schmidt had instructed him to cease harboring resentment. "I'm glad you were wise about that. There's something I haven't told you, and I don't want to die with that on my conscience. His uncle told your Cousin Julie that the young man would do anything you wanted."

"He *did*?" Leonie exclaimed.

Henri did not like this show of interest. "Of course it's too late now," he said.

Leonie sighed.

"The religious side," Henri began, "is not the most important at all. There are other things—"

And then he remembered again what Father Schmidt had said, and he checked the denunciation of the Calverts that was on the tip of his tongue. Being in the state of grace and forgiving your enemies could be a distinct handicap. In this case, it left him up a tree. He closed his eyes, and Leonie, thinking that he had gone to sleep, slipped out.

But he opened his eyes a moment later and missed her. She might have misunderstood, he thought, alarmed. Perhaps she had taken his remarks for approval of Lincoln Calvert and consent to her marriage with him.

He called her back. He did not want her to make this mistake. And yet there was nothing now to restrain her. After he was gone, she would marry that—that young man—and people would say that she was defying him after his death. Henri's mind was suddenly illuminated by the conviction that it would not do to leave such a legacy of temptation behind him.

"Leonie," he said, "you had better do what you think is right."

Leonie kissed his cheek.

"You poor old darling," she said tenderly. "Well, I won't marry anybody you don't approve of. You don't need to worry about that."

This was victory, but now Henri found that he didn't want it.

"No, no," he said. "You marry him if you love him. But don't let him put it off."

After Leonie had wept the proper tears in Heloise's arms and had dried her eyes, she said, "I won't do anything about it until Uncle is better. Unless you think I could write to Lincoln. But could I do that? It might seem as if—"

"Go tell your Cousin Julie," Heloise advised, "and let her go to the Colonel. It will please her for one thing. You may not know it, but she always favored this match."

Miss Julie came next morning to "inquire after Henri," and after visiting briefly with Heloise, went up to see him.

Henri was gloomy about his condition, but assured her that he was resigned. Miss Julie, having conquered the roast pork, was optimistic.

"You'll be all right, son," she said. "You've got a long while to go yet. I'm glad you had the good sense to let Leonie have her young man. A convert is something that God will reward us both for. I prayed for it from the first."

"Confound her unmitigated gall," Henri muttered when the old lady had departed. "It was my doing and now she wants to take credit herself."

There was a note from Antoinette at noontime. Henri read it and groaned.

"She blames me for introducing them to her," he said.

"I don't understand," Heloise said. "Blames you for what?"

"They've gone, don't you see," Henri said.

"And she blames you because they didn't stay?"

"She says there's something suspicious about their going so soon."

"Well, isn't there?"

Henri rolled his eyes despairingly.

"It will look so," he said.

He was glad he was not going to live, to have people point the finger of scorn at him, the consort of criminals. And he was grateful to God for sending him that warning about his insurance money. Now Heloise and Leonie wouldn't have to worry about where their next few meals were coming from.

Chapter Thirty-Nine

"YOU CAN SEE it wasn't my fault," Lincoln said, after he and Leonie had settled matters and had assured each other that no two people had ever been so happy. "I just couldn't help myself. Your uncle had me in an impossible position. I couldn't even tell you."

"Uncle means well," Leonie said. "He has the best heart in the world, but everything I do seems to make him obstinate."

"I don't know if I ought to tell you this," Lincoln said, "but he was really the one that gave me the idea."

"I don't see what you mean. Gave you what idea?"

"He made me see that I was really in love with you," Lincoln said. "I was too stupid to know what I wanted, I guess."

"Well," Leonie said, "I don't know just how flattering that is. But we'd better not tell Uncle. Not for a long time. It might give him a relapse, just when he's so much better."

Henri was undoubtedly better, but he did not like to be proven wrong and he was an unwilling convalescent.

"What he needs is to recover his interest in life," Dr. Forbes said. "See that he reads the paper. Get some of his old friends to visit him. And tell Miss Julie not to tell him about all the beautiful deaths she's seen."

Heloise obeyed all these recommendations except the last, the difficulties of which, she was sure, Dr. Forbes had not sufficiently considered.

At first Henri pushed the paper aside—half in fear that there would be something about his connection with McDevitt in it—but later he consented to have Leonie read it to him. He played Canfield on a lapboard, and Casino with Leonie, and finally he asked for his record catalogues.

Colonel Beecham came in to supplement the newspaper accounts of the war, which were far from satisfactory to a military man, and

was tactful about Leonie's engagement. Charlie Desfontaines, not at all cast down by the brevity of the McDevitt firm's tenancy of the office he had rented, made a call and talked about the physical heavens—Miss Julie, of course, taking care of the spiritual aspects.

Henri next consented to sit up in an armchair, and agreed to humble himself and write a pleasant note to Colonel Calvert, thanking him for his excellent advice, apologizing for his rudeness in not seeming more grateful for it at first, and mentioning his satisfaction at the understanding between the two young people.

He felt cheerier when Antoinette sent a note informing him that Colonel Calvert had explained that the McDevitts' hasty departure was not, after all, Henri's fault, and hoping that she would soon see him.

"When I get damned good and ready," Henri said to himself, "if I ever am well enough to leave this room." He privately did not believe that he ever would be.

But, a day later, when Heloise smilingly announced that Colonel Calvert had come to call, Henri sat up straight in his armchair.

"Thank God I shaved this morning," he muttered. He rose shakily. "Get my things, please, Sister. No, don't try to persuade me to stay in this room. I'm not going to let old Calvert find me in a padded chair like an invalid. It may be the last time I ever do it, but I'll get downstairs. There are some things a man can't put up with."

The Colonel rose from his chair near the Franklin stove as Henri entered with slow and uncertain steps.

"Good afternoon, sir," Henri said, but he did not go to the length of extending his hand. "It was kind of you to come."

"I heard you were a bit unwell," said Colonel Calvert, "and I thought I'd come to see how you were."

"Please sit down, sir," Henri said.

They were seated on opposite sides of the little stove.

"Quite a nip in the air these days," said the Colonel, tentatively.

"We must expect it," Henri said. He cleared his throat. "I am indebted to you, sir, for the good advice you gave me."

Colonel Calvert regarded him benevolently. "Sharpers, Mr. Lemay. It's hard for us honest people to see what they're up to sometimes."

"You were very kind," Henri went on, taking his medicine all at one gulp, "to explain to Antoinette."

"A pleasure and a privilege," said the Colonel amiably.

Henri drummed on the arm of his chair, not knowing what to say next. "Excuse me a moment," he said, rising with effort and going to the door. "Heloise, my dear."

"Yes, Brother?"

"Please offer the—Colonel" (Henri hated to use that title) "a glass of sherry."

He tottered back to his chair.

"I hope," said the Colonel, "that this brief illness will not affect your voice, Mr. Lemay."

Henri started. He well remembered what his old enemy had said about his singing, but he was prepared to take politeness for what it was worth.

"Singing," he said, "has been one of my few pleasures, but I am getting old, and some day I'll have to give it up. It might as well be now as later."

"Petigru told me," said the Colonel, "that your voice was magnificent when he heard it during the summer."

"Very kind of him," Henri said. "Very."

Heloise entered with the sherry and the Colonel poured himself a glassful. The two old gentlemen raised their glasses and each took a sip. Henri reached for the box of cigars and offered them.

"No, thank you," said the Colonel. "I subscribe to the modern vice of smoking cigarettes. A protest against growing old, I suppose. Yes, growing old," he repeated. "I have seen a lot, Mr. Lemay. And I have made some mistakes and a good many enemies." He added the last a little proudly.

"You have a good many friends, though," Henri said, for want of something better

"I appreciate them," said the Colonel. "And since we are going to be related, Mr. Lemay, I wish I could number you among them."

"I bear no malice," Henri said, majestically.

"H'm," said Colonel Calvert. "Certain fundamental disagreements, I am afraid . . . You may be glad to know that I have changed my mind about the war."

"The War?" Henri exclaimed.

"The present war," the Colonel explained hastily. "I have been wrong about it. My sympathies were misplaced."

"I am glad to hear you say so."

The Colonel took another sip of sherry and lighted a Turkish cigarette. He put down his glass. "I am very happy about Miss Leonie and Petigru," he said. "She is a beautiful young woman and everyone speaks well of her."

"Thank you, sir," Henri said. "We feel that she is a very lovely gyrl. And your nephew is a handsome young fellow."

"Handsome is as handsome does," said the Colonel modestly. "I believe this marriage will make a man of him." He rose. "I must go now," he said. "You have been ill. Petigru is going to call formally. He felt that it was best to wait until you had completely recovered."

They shook hands, and Heloise saw the Colonel out.

"I'm glad you two are on pleasant terms," she said to Henri.

"I don't intend to yield one inch," Henri said.

"He's a handsome old gentleman, isn't he?"

"I suppose women think so," Henri replied, taking a shaky first step up the stairs. "But he's failing."

Mr. Peterson, who had been talked to forcefully by Henry O'Donnell, wrote pleasantly to Henri. He had failed to find a satisfactory successor, and he still needed a man he could put complete trust in and who took an interest in the business.

Although he concealed the fact, Henri was set up a good deal by this letter. However, it remained for Joseph Newman to set the seal on his convalescence.

Joseph was as ramshackle and ungrammatical as ever, but much more cheerful than when Henri had last seen him.

"I gittin' along right good with my singin'," he confided. "They ask me to sing in St. Mary's choir. They's a nice gyrl een de choir," Joseph added, blushing hotly, "and I and she does sing some duets together."

"That's fine, Joseph. I hope she'll appreciate you," Henri said.

"Miss Lamb ask me to tell you that Mr. Durand leavin' the choir and she like to have you fuh bass soloist."

Henri's pulses had leapt at the news, but he only smiled wanly.

"No, my boy," he said, "my singing days are over. Let them get some young fellow."

But after Joseph had gone, he opened the piano, struck an F, and sang down the scale. It surprised him that his voice had come back so well.

"Magnificent," he rumbled, "magnificent."

Chapter Forty

THE CHOIR OF St. Mary's was well into its Christmas midnight music and was playing to a full house. Miss Julie Gerard, ensconced in a front pew, was beaming. It was a great occasion for beside her sat that notorious backslider, her otherwise excellent son-in-law Henry O'Donnell, and behind them were Annette, Betsy, the three boys, Heloise Lemay, Leonie, and Lincoln Calvert. Only Henri was missing from the group.

And then, at the *Sanctus*, a rich, deep and powerful bass rang out in the solo. It was a voice such as St. Mary's had never heard, and the sound of it, as it filled the little church, was so impressive that the congregation, despite the mildness of the weather and the valiant efforts of the sexton, felt something almost like a chill.

Miss Julie, who couldn't hear as well as most of the others, was impressed nevertheless, and she poked Henry O'Donnell and beamed even more expansively at him. Henry, contrary to his custom with his mother-in-law, beamed back at her.

The solo ended, the choir took over, and Miss Julie returned to muttering over her rosary.

Pleased with his performance, which he privately characterized to himself as magnificent, Henri Lemay sat trying to look modest. He gazed over the rail of the choir loft at his assembled relatives, with a particular interest in young Lincoln Calvert, who, as Leonie's accredited fiancé, had claimed the privilege of accompanying them to Mass.

"Fine young man," Henri said to himself, as the anonymities in the choir kept up the good work. "Edifying to see him here with Leonie . . ."

Everyone seemed pleased. The choir director came over and spoke in a whisper to him, and Henri was radiant. He had the rather unchristian thought that perhaps the singing at the Cathedral was not what it might have been on this occasion. Well, he had

hated to desert the Cathedral, but they had brought it on themselves, hadn't they?

Afterward, when his family and friends gathered on the steps to congratulate him and to wish him a Merry Christmas, he modestly disclaimed anything unusual. "You should have heard me fifteen years ago," he said.

Joseph Newman was there with the young lady from the choir; he had followed Henri downstairs but had modestly stood aside for others to pronounce their congratulations first. He had never got over the disparity between Henri's size and his voice, and he shook his head and laughed when he spoke of it. Charlie Durand, whose retirement at eighty had led to Henri's joining St. Mary's choir, added his congratulations too.

"You were never as good as this," Henry O'Donnell said. On the way home with his family, however, he did permit himself one harmless joke. "You'd think it was Mr. Lemay's birthday," he said, "instead of—"

"Henry!" said Miss Julie, but she giggled.

All this acclaim could never have lasted longer than Henri would have liked, but finally it was time to go home. Leonie and Lincoln followed Henri and Heloise to the little house on Coming Street and before Lincoln left—he was of course invited to breakfast—Henri relaxed his principles sufficiently to leave them briefly at the front door, alone.

He slept soundly until the booming of firecrackers awakened him. Then dressing swiftly, he took two packages of salutes from the dresser and went downstairs to do his part.

Lafayette was already there, firing salutes in a large molasses barrel.

"Merry Christmas, Lafayette," Henri said.

"Merry Christmas, Mistuh Henri."

Lafayette handed him the stick of punk. Henri lighted a salute and flung it into the barrel, where it exploded with a fine booming roar, and Lafayette followed it with another. They kept on until the salutes were gone, and then regretfully listened to the crashes other merrymakers were producing.

"You'd better come along to Mr. O'Donnell's tonight," Henri said. "They'll have lots of fireworks as usual." He saw Queenie

coming through the gate and wished her the compliments of the season. It was a great day.

He could hardly wait for Heloise and Leonie to come down and open their presents with him. When, after an eternity, they were finally ready, Heloise sat at the parlor piano and Henri sang two verses of "Adeste Fideles."

He felt of the packages, and opened the first. "Sherry," he said almost reverently. He smelled the large package. "Cigars." But there was another of the same shape; cigars, also, from Mr. Peterson. He knew, from its shape, what the other package was. "Records," he said. He tore it open. "Plançon," he said in awe. "And the 'Sextette,' too."

"From Lincoln and me," Leonie said.

"That boy," Henri said, "had better pay his debts. But it was mighty nice of you both."

"And what's this?" Heloise demanded, tearing the packings off a large object that stood before the tree. "A sewing machine. A new sewing machine." She stared at it.

"From Cousin Henry," Leonie told her.

Henri felt the tears springing into his eyes. It was, he said to himself, magnificent—like a foretaste of the Lemay fortune he would some day inherit.

"And now let's all be as quiet as we can," Heloise said. "Lincoln ought to be here soon for breakfast. There's a long day ahead . . . and it will soon be time for dinner at Annette's."

"Yes, it will be a busy day," Henri agreed. He did not annoy Heloise by mentioning his morning call on Antoinette.

She was expecting him to show her Massachusetts guests, who were to arrive within the week, all the beauties of the city.

He hoped they had no designs for the improvement of Charleston.

(Continued from Front Flap)

with the problem of Leonie. Despite all his attempts to circumvent it, she had formed a romantic attachment for Lincoln Petigru Calvert, nephew of his old enemy. The fellow's very name was an abomination to the traditions of the Old South. It was an unhappy summer for Henri as he became ever more deeply involved in his schemes for saving his beloved niece. Almost as damaging to his pride as Leonie's stubbornness was his discovery that his reputation as Charleston's most honest citizen had been betrayed by an unprincipled promoter from Virginia, a State scarcely to be called properly Southern.

Out of such elements, the author of *Pride's Way*, Literary Guild success of 1945, has contrived a gay and gentle tale, warm in sympathy and rich in humor. How it would all have ended, save for the intervention of Miss Julie Gerard, the wonderful old lady of *Pride's Way*, no reader will even dare to speculate. In *Pound Foolish* Robert Molloy has written that rare, charming and delightful thing—a romance of manners.



Photo by Larry Colwell

About the Author

Robert Molloy was born in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1906. His family had lived in the South for generations, though there were Irish, French and New England elements in his ancestry. The Molloyes moved North when Robert was twelve, and some time later he was graduated from George Washington High School in New York City. The next few years he devoted to the study of music.

During this time he had written two novels. Though unpublished, these brought him free-lance work as a publisher's reader, reporting on European novels. In 1931 he translated Romulo Gallego's *Doña Barbara*, and in 1933 he was a co-translator of Lucien Pemjean's *Captain d'Artagnan*. In 1936 he became assistant to the Literary Editor of the *New York Sun*, and from 1943 to 1945 was himself Literary Editor.

In 1945 Mr. Molloy published his first book, *Pride's Way*, a novel of Charleston which was a Literary Guild selection. This was followed by a second novel, *Uneasy Spring*, and in 1947 he published *Charleston: A Gracious Heritage*. His book previous to *Pound Foolish* was *The Best of Intentions*, a novel of family life in upper Manhattan.